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Is the Bible Infallible?

SPEECHES

IN

THE REV. DR. DODS' CASE,

*IN THE FREE PRESBYTERY OF GLASGOW, ON
5th SEPTEMBER AND 27th NOVEMBER, 1877.*

BY THE

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GLASGOW.

REVISED AND CORRECTED.

WITH DR. C. HODGE OF PRINCETON'S LETTER, AND AN
APPENDIX CONTAINING THE COMMITTEE OF
PRESBYTERY'S REPORT.

GLASGOW:

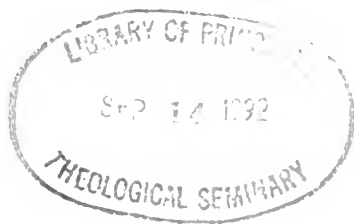
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SPEECH I.

GLASGOW, FREE PRESBYTERY HOUSE,
5th Sept., 1877.

IN rising to call the attention of the Presbytery to the sermon on "Revelation and Inspiration," recently published by the Rev. Dr. Dods, and to the new preface prefixed to the third edition of that sermon, I beg to say for myself, and for the brethren in concert with whom I am acting, that we deeply deplore that there should be any necessity for our taking such a step. Could we have done so with a good conscience, we should a thousand times rather have refrained from moving in the matter. It is to one and all of us a most painful thing to have to call in question the character of the teaching of a brother so greatly esteemed by us all. Such, however, is the opinion we entertain of the unscriptural and dangerous nature of the views propounded in these publications—views which, in our judgment, are subversive of the very foundations of Christianity—that we feel—were we to remain silent, we should be guilty of unfaithfulness to God and to his truth.

I beg further to say, and I do it in all sincerity, that I regret it should have fallen to me to occupy my present position. Most thankful should I have been could some abler and more experienced brother have been prevailed upon to take the initiative in the matter. No one can be more sensible than I am of my inability to do justice to the unspeakably important subject I have tremblingly undertaken to bring before you. The esteemed brethren, however, with whom I act, know and can testify that it is not at my own instance, but at their urgent and unanimous request, that I have done so. My earnest prayer is that, in endeavouring to state the grounds on which the proposed motion proceeds, I may be kept, on the one hand, from doing injustice to the truth, and, on the other, from giving unnecessary offence to our brother, or to any one else. The motion I have to propose is, "That a committee be appointed to examine the sermon on 'Revelation and Inspiration,' recently published by the Rev. Dr. Dods, and the new preface prefixed to the third edition of that sermon, and to report to a subsequent meeting of Presbytery as to the nature and character of the views

“ of divine revelation, and especially of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, set forth by Dr. Dods in these publications.” *

To prevent misapprehension, I have to state at the outset that, apart from what bears more directly upon the questions of Revelation and Inspiration, numerous very objectionable statements are to be met with in the sermon before us. Thus, at p. 11, the author speaks of other “ great religions ” besides Christianity and Judaism, as possessing “ canonical scriptures,” and containing “ a moral teaching little if at all inferior to that contained in our own.” At p. 23 it is declared that Paul’s epistles “ teach that “ spirit supersedes law,” and that this is “ the ultimate religious teaching the world needs or can have.” At p. 25 the same apostle is spoken of as having “ deduced a doctrinal system from “ the revelation made to him.” At p. 26 it is affirmed that “ the Bible has not done its work until it takes us past itself, and makes us independent of it,” and that “ when the Bible has done “ its work, and has brought us into a living fellowship with God “ . . . we say to it as the Samaritans said to the woman— “ ‘ Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard “ him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the “ Saviour of the world.’ ”

These, and not a few other statements of a like character, to be met with in this sermon, I regard as altogether unwarrantable. At the same time, had this Sermon † contained nothing else objectionable, I for one should not have felt called upon to bring it under the notice of the Presbytery.

Nay, had it contained only what is said upon the subject of Revelation, I do not know that I should have deemed it necessary that any Presbyterian cognizance should be taken of it. Not that I regard what is said on this latter point as satisfactory. Far from it. Judging from the way in which the matter is spoken of in this sermon, the Bible, while containing revelations by God, may also contain much that is in no sense a divine revelation, but simply the words, thoughts, and impressions of the writers themselves. Nay, more, I cannot but conclude that, according to the teaching of this sermon, there is in the Bible, and that not merely in regard to matters of which the writers may have become acquainted “ in the ordinary way,” much that cannot be regarded either as having been supernaturally revealed, or as possessed of divine authority. In what other light, for example, can such statements as those

* The following was moved as an amendment by the Rev. Dr. Adam :—
“ The Presbytery, having special respect to the difficulties felt and expressed by brethren regarding the views of Dr. Dods on the subject of Revelation and Inspiration, as stated by him in a sermon lately published, entitled ‘ Revelation and Inspiration,’ resolve to appoint a committee to consider deliberately whether the Presbytery was called to take any action with reference to said views, and if so, of what nature, and to report to a subsequent meeting of Presbytery.”

† When I mention the Sermon I include also the Preface.

contained in the following quotation from page 6 be regarded?—

“I accept as authoritative those whose teaching is connected with the historical revelations of God, and I decline to accept as authoritative any others. There has been a distinct series of such revelations culminating and terminating in the Incarnation. Those whom God raised up to preserve and diffuse the knowledge of these revelations I accept; but all teachers out of the historical line or arising subsequently to its termination in Christ, I take for what they are worth; but even when they teach me most valuable truth, I cannot put them on a level with those whose teaching is directly connected with God’s revelation of Himself in history.”

From the fact that no one, except perhaps Mr. Page Hopps, ever seriously proposed that Dr. Dods should accept as authoritative teachers of divine revelations, any besides the writers of the Bible, it seems clear, especially from the emphatic way in which he expresses himself, that it is not of any outside the Bible, but of some of its actual writers that the author here speaks—declining to accept them as authoritative teachers, because they are out of the historical line, or arose subsequently to its termination in Christ. But be this as it may, it is impossible to see how, with his views of inspiration, the author can regard the Bible, taken as a whole, as a revelation from God to man.

Nay, if we are to judge from the language employed, it is difficult to avoid coming to the conclusion, that not a little even of that to which the name of revelation is given, is not regarded as objective presentations of truth, made *ab extra*, to the minds of the sacred writers; but truths subjectively discovered, and evolved from within, out of the depths of their own spiritual natures, by the aid of the Holy Spirit. At least, I am unable to see what other interpretation can legitimately be put upon such statements as these—“The evangelists” (p. 20) “had the Spirit” of Christ, and therefore *coincided* with Him as to what was “important and what was little in his life;” “The kind of truth” (p. 21) “about God, which the world needed, was not that “which is reached by reasoning from first principles; but that “which is attained *experimentally* by those who hold life-long “fellowship with God;” mark the expression, not that which is supernaturally revealed to them by God, but “that which is *attained experimentally*,” in other words, discovered by, and brought forth from the recesses of, their own spiritual intuitions and experiences.

But be the author’s views of revelation what they may, there can be no dubiety as to what is taught in this Sermon, in regard to Inspiration. Equally obvious is it, that his views on this point, are contrary to the Word of God, to the *Confession of Faith*, to the doctrine hitherto held and professed, and universally understood to be taught, in the Free Church, and to what has been held and professed by the ablest and most orthodox theologians, not in this country only, but in every country in Christendom;

yea, contrary to the faith and creed of, the universal Church of God in every age.

As I understand it, the doctrine of Scripture is, that the writers of the Bible not only had the whole of what they have written supernaturally made known to them by God, or were specially directed by Him to the selection of it ; but that they were all specially and miraculously qualified and enabled by Him to record, with infallible accuracy, what was thus supernaturally revealed to them ; that they were completely preserved from errors and mistakes, not only in regard to the doctrines they declared, but also in regard to the facts and incidents they recorded ; and that, as the result of this, the Bible is, from beginning to end, a record of infallible truth and divine authority—the very Word of God ; or as the venerable Locke declared, “ It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter.”

In this sermon, however, it is denied that the writers of the Bible were thus supernaturally inspired ; and maintained that the Holy Scriptures,* as originally written, contained numerous errors and mistakes, and so are not possessed of absolute infallibility.

First of all, it is denied that the writers of the Bible were supernaturally inspired. In proof of this, look, for example, at what is said on p. 3, in regard to the purpose for which the sermon was written—

“ In the first place, I should have expected intelligent readers to apprehend that the sermon was written as an apologetic attempt. My main object was to indicate that, so far as the historical contents of Scripture are concerned, Revelation stands firm, although there should prove to be no such thing as Inspiration. It will not be disputed by any ordinarily informed person, that a large amount of the current scepticism is due to the mixing up of these two distinct things. If Revelation is to be conserved, it must not be bound up and made to stand or fall with a special theory of Inspiration. My aim was to show that of these two distinct things, Revelation is by far the more important, that in certain books of Scripture the separation between the two can very well be effected, and that, supposing you give up that theory of Inspiration which unquestionably staggers many intelligent and earnest men, Revelation remains. All that we need to contend for is the historic credibility of the narratives. This we can establish in the completest way : anything beyond this is not indispensable.”

The sermon having been written as an apologetic attempt, and the object of it being to enable sceptics to accept the contents of the Bible, some may be disposed to think that those who take exception to its contents, ignorantly and ungenerously overlook the author's purpose in writing it, and fail to give sufficient weight to the motives by which he was actuated. Moreover, if I mistake not, the author himself is of opinion that the end he had

* N.B.—When I speak of the Holy Scriptures, I mean, of course, the Scriptures *as originally given* ; as it is about errors alleged by Dr. Dods to have existed in these original documents, and about these alone, and not about such as may be due to variations of MSS., or to translations, that any question has been raised in the Presbytery.

in view ought to go far to obviate objections to the means he has adopted in order to the accomplishment of that end. It ought to be remembered however, that the end, even when good, can never justify the means when bad, and that we must never do evil that good may come.

Now, not only do I regard the object which the writer says he had in view, as a very hopeless one, but I look upon the means employed to accomplish it as most unwarrantable. What are these means? It is by trying to show that Revelation is far more important than Inspiration, and not only so, but that, in so far at least as the historical portions of Scripture are concerned, a separation can very well be effected between these; that all that need be contended for is the historic credibility of the narratives; and that nothing beyond this is indispensable.

Now, what is this, but just a denial that the writers of these historical Scriptures either were, or required to be supernaturally inspired? Did the author believe that these writers were divinely inspired, and that in these Scriptures Inspiration and Revelation are by a divine hand wedded together, we cannot for a moment suppose that, even to conciliate such "intelligent and earnest men" as are staggered at the thought of these writers being supernaturally inspired, he would ever have dreamt of attempting to separate what God had thus joined together. How any who reverence the Bible as being throughout the inspired word of God, should be expected to look upon such an "apologetic attempt" with approbation, or even with indulgence, is inexplicable. Nay, it is amazing that the author himself should have been able for a moment to imagine that by any such means he should be instrumental in getting "intelligent earnest men" to accept the contents of the Bible as "an infallible rule of faith and life." The man who will not accept the contents of the Bible as supernaturally inspired, will never receive them as supernaturally revealed. Nor, in affirming this, do I stand alone. The author's venerable father, the late Rev. Marcus Dods, of Belford, took the very same view. At p. 42 of his "Remarks on the Bible," he declares that "If the Scriptures are spurned by the infidel, when they are presented to him as wholly the word of God, it is preposterous to suppose that they will command his reverence when presented to him as partly the word of God, and partly that of man. Give the infidel one book, or one verse, and upon the same principle he has a right to demand the surrender of the whole Bible."

But, perhaps, I will here be told that the writer of this sermon does not deny that the historical writers of Scripture were inspired, but repeatedly speaks of their inspiration. True; but the inspiration he attributes to them does not deserve the name, as Dr. Martin in his admirable pamphlet on "The Westminster Doctrine on the Inspiration of Scripture" has conclusively shown.

Thus, at p. 20 of this sermon, we have the following statement:—

“The inspiration of the apostles fitting them to preserve to the world the life and character of our Lord, was not an influence which served them instead of eyes and memory, but it was an influence which set them in the right attitude towards Him they were to reflect, and which made them sensitive to everything in Him which was of the highest value. We have nothing in them of the trifling gossiping biographer, who tells you the colour of his hero’s eyes, or details his daily habits and the kind of food he relished : here we are in a spiritual region, because we are in the hands of spiritual men.”

Such, according to this sermon, is the only inspiration vouchsafed to the apostles. It must be obvious to the least observant that there is nothing special or supernatural in its character, nothing in short different from, or superior to, that which might have been possessed by any very spiritually-minded Christian. That this is really the idea intended to be conveyed is clear from what follows (p. 21):—

“Inspiration, in short, is a spiritual gift, and only indirectly a mental one. It illuminates the mind as enthusiasm does, by stimulating and elevating it ; it enriches the memory as love does, by intensifying the interest in a certain object and by making the mind sensitive to its impressions and retentive of them. It brings light to the understanding, and wisdom to the spirit, as purity of intention does, or as a high aim in life does. But it is not a gift conferring intellectual acuteness where that did not previously exist, nor imparting any superhuman power of knowledge. If an error existed in the records used by the compiler of the Books of Chronicles, if the documents from which he was gathering his information mis-stated the numbers that fell in some battle, inspiration furnished him with no means of detecting such an error.”

These quotations, I submit, make it perfectly plain that in this sermon it is denied that the writers of the Holy Scriptures were supernaturally inspired, and not only so but maintained that supernatural assistance was not needed to enable them to see and represent truly a revelation of God. If any thing further were necessary to demonstrate the correctness of this view we have it in what is said at page 22, in answer to the question—

“What is it then that distinguishes these writers of Scripture? Mainly this, that they had the revelation at first hand, that they were the men before whom the revelation was made, and who were so impressed with it and saw its meaning, as to be moved to preserve and perpetuate this impression for the sake of others. As John remarkably says, ‘That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.’”

But not only is it thus denied that the historical writers of Scripture were supernaturally inspired, and maintained that their distinguishing characteristics were that they had their facts at first hand, and were, in addition, very spiritually-minded, honest men, but it is declared that this is all that they themselves lay claim to as entitling their writings to credit. Thus, at p. 19, in reply to the enquiry, “What was the special equipment of those “who were chosen to record the revelations which God made?” it is thus written:—

“So far as regards the narration of events in which God revealed Himself, we find the historical writers of Scripture in thorough agreement with criticism, asserting that the prime requisite is, knowledge of these facts at first hand.

Luke grounds the credibility of his gospel, not on any inspiration which could give him a knowledge of events of which he could not in any other way be cognisant, but upon the ordinary grounds of belief in history—viz., that he had his facts from those who were eyewitnesses. We have only one gospel which claims for itself to have been written by an apostle, and he bases his trustworthiness on the fact of his being an eyewitness of what he relates and an honest man. ‘He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.’ . . . They (the apostles) never ask us to take their word for a thing which they had not good means of knowing in the ordinary way, they do not come before us as men who by a process called inspiration were made aware of facts which had not come within their own observation or knowledge, neither do they bid us accept their testimony without question as infallible.”

Now, Sir, while, in common with all who believe in the supernatural inspiration of the writers of the Bible, I not only admit, but maintain, that the apostles and other historical writers of the Scriptures employed all competent means to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the facts they record, and are entitled, apart from their inspiration, to have their narratives received as the productions of intelligent, well-informed, and trustworthy men, who wrote only what they believed to be true, I most emphatically deny that what Luke and John say is to be regarded as an indirect disclaimer of supernatural inspiration, or even as an “assertion that the prime requisite was knowledge of the facts “recorded at first hand.” Moreover, even were it the fact that the apostles, as asserted in the last quotation, never ask us to take their word for a thing which they had not good means of knowing in the ordinary way, or come before us as men who, by a process called inspiration, were made aware of facts which had not come within their own observation or knowledge, it would not follow from this, either that they were not, in regard to all that they wrote, supernaturally inspired, or that they did not claim to be so, or believe that they were. And I cannot but be amazed that such an argument should ever have been employed. The writers of Scripture did not need to be always declaring that they were inspired, and that what they wrote was written by divine help, and under supernatural direction. As divinely commissioned apostles and prophets, whose official position and standing in the Church were equal to, or even higher than that of the ancient prophets, whom all believed to be divinely inspired, they were known and acknowledged by all to be under the very same supernatural influence and direction in all their official sayings and doings as these ancient prophets.

I deny, however, that they ever make any such assertion as that which, in the extracts just given, is attributed to them. Still more emphatically do I deny that they never ask us to take their word for a thing which they had not good means of knowing in the ordinary way, or that their inspiration was not an influence which ever served them “instead of eyes or memory.” Not to speak of what Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us of what was said and done during our Lord’s temptation in the wilderness, during His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and at the sepulchre on

the morning of the resurrection, of much of which neither they nor any others were ear or eye-witnesses, and with which, therefore, they could not have become acquainted in the ordinary way, any more than Moses could have become acquainted in the ordinary way with the facts of the creation, but must have had it revealed to them either by Christ Himself, or by the Holy Spirit; does not John tell us that "all things were made by the Word, and without Him was not any thing made that was made"? Does not Paul declare * that God chose believers in Christ "before the foundation of the world that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love"; † that Christ before coming into the world was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," and that because He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father"; that ‡ the names of his fellow-labourers were "in the book of life"; and that "God promised eternal life before the world began"? Does not Peter testify § that "the angels desire to look into the things declared in the Scriptures regarding Christ"; and that || "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment"? These, and numerous other facts of a like character, the apostles, as "no careful student of Scripture can well deny," do ask us to take "their word for."

Now, I should like to know what the "good means" were which they had for knowing these things "in the ordinary way." They were neither eye-witnesses of them, nor ear-witnesses; nor could any others have had a "knowledge of these facts at first hand," or otherwise than by supernatural revelation.

It is affirmed that the inspiration of the apostles was not an influence that served them "instead of memory." Are we to understand from this that Matthew, without any divine, supernatural help, recollected and accurately recorded the Sermon on the Mount, and the many other words and sayings of our Lord recorded in his gospel; and that John in like manner, by his own unaided mental efforts, recollected and accurately recorded the valedictory discourses of our Lord contained in the latter chapters of his gospel; and not these only, but all the many other conversations and discourses recorded by him? If this is what is meant, and I cannot see what other meaning the words can bear, then the author must have a much higher opinion of the apostles' powers of memory than their Master had. Was it not just because the Lord knew that they were altogether incapable, of themselves, of remembering and recording what he had said to them, or to others in their hearing,

* Eph. i. 4.

† Phil. ii. 6, 9, 11.

‡ Phil. iv. 3.

§ 1 Pet. i. 12.

|| 2 Pet. ii. 4.

that the Holy Spirit was to be sent to bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them; in other words, to be to them "instead of memory"? Nay, was He not sent also to make known to them many things of which they had not had any previous knowledge, or means of knowing—that is, to "make them aware of facts which had not previously come within their own observation or knowledge." Hear what Christ himself said upon these points, as recorded in John xiv. 25 and 26, and xvi. 12 and 13—"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth has come, he will guide you into all truth . . . and he will shew you things to come." So manifest indeed is it, that the apostles could not, without divine supernatural aid, have remembered and recorded that which is contained in the gospels, that even Strauss declares that "it is contrary to all the laws belonging to the human faculty of memory that long discourses, such as those of Jesus given in the four gospels, could have been faithfully recollected and reproduced"—that is, without supernatural aid, which, of course, he maintains was not accorded to them.

But, in short, the views propounded in this sermon regarding the inspiration, or rather the non-inspiration of the apostles, as I am prepared to prove, are just the views of Spinoza, Grotius, and Le Clerc; of Schleiermacher and other German rationalists; and of Coleridge, Maurice, Hare, Morell, and others of their disciples in this country. "Inspiration," says Morell, "depends upon the manner, form, and accuracy of a man's religious intuitions. . . . Let there be a due purification of the moral nature" (or as in this sermon p. 21, 'emptied of self-seeking, and worldly ways of looking at things'), "a perfect harmony of the spiritual being with the mind of God" (or as in this sermon, 'sympathy with the purposes of God'), "a removal of all inward disturbances from the heart" (or as in this sermon, 'having no interest to see any thing different from what God actually makes known'), "and what is to prevent or disturb the immediate intuition of divine things, and what do we require in inspiration more than this?"*

Nor is it only in the case of the original eleven apostles, and of the four gospels, that inspiration is thus evacuated of every thing supernatural, and reduced to a level with that which is, or may be, possessed by any true Christian. The same thing is done in the case of the apostle Paul and of his epistles. For, although he is spoken of as a very wonderful man, from whom it is "somewhat dangerous to differ," and his epistles characterised as very remarkable productions, by means of which he

* *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 158, 176, 186.

performed one of the world's hugest tasks—to no extent is the credit of what he wrote or did ascribed to the fact of his having been miraculously qualified for the work thus accomplished by him. “It was Paul,” it is declared, (p. 23,) “who most distinctly saw what Christianity really was, and it is in these epistles he communicated to the world the knowledge that the true religion, the religion of the Spirit had come.” (Was the religion of the Old Testament not the true religion?) “They teach in a word, that spirit supersedes law.” (As I read them they teach no such thing). “Paul was in point of fact the man who saw what God meant in the revelation made in Christ.” (Did the other apostles not see this?) “In comparison with this, it seems,” the writer goes on to declare, “quite a secondary question to ask what was Paul’s inspiration, and how far did it carry him.” It is very obvious, however, that the apostle himself did not regard the matter in any such light. Hear how he writes on the subject to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv. 37), and to the Galatians (ch. i. 8, 9, 11 and 12). “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This, I submit, is not the language of a man who regarded it as a matter of secondary importance what his inspiration was, or how far it carried him. Still less is it the language of a man who was doubtful as to whether he was supernaturally inspired or not, or of one who would have endorsed the following, from p. 25 :— “I, for my part, do not care what meaning a man attaches to the word ‘inspired,’ nor, indeed, whether he says these epistles are inspired or not, so long as he accepts their teaching.” How different this from the words of Dr. Owen :—

“What it was, they (the apostles) gave testimony unto is duly to be considered, and this was not only that the Book of the Scripture was good, holy, and true, in all the contents of it, but that the whole and every part of it was given by divine inspiration. . . . On this account, and on no other, did they themselves receive the Scripture, and also believe and yield obedience unto the things contained in it. Neither would they admit that their testimony was received, if the whole world would be content to allow of or obey the Scripture on any other or lower terms; nor will God Himself allow of an assent unto the Scripture under any other conception but as the word which is immediately spoken by Himself,”

that is, supernaturally inspired.

Having in the sentence last quoted declared that he does not care what meaning a man attaches to the word “inspired,” the author proceeds to give us the meaning which he himself attaches

to it. "The only inspiration," he says, "worth contending for is "the ability to see and represent truly a revelation of God." This at first sight seems all that could be desired; and it would be so, if by the word "truly" were meant "infallibly." No one, however, whose inspiration is not a supernatural endowment, but simply, as the author maintains, a "spiritual gift," and who is liable to make mistakes, can be regarded as able to represent with infallible accuracy a revelation of God. The ability, therefore, which comes short of this, and does not preclude the possibility of error or mistake, does not deserve the name of inspiration. Nor would any orthodox theologian ever think of so designating it. Assuredly it is not "worth contending for."

In what follows we have a justification of the statement that the author does not care whether a person says the epistles of Paul "are inspired or not, so long as he accepts their teaching." "I do not," he says, "believe what Paul says, because I first "believe him to be inspired; but I believe him to be inspired "because he brings light to my spirit which can only have proceeded from God."

The design of this obviously is to show that belief in the inspiration of the writers of the Bible is not a factor in the process by which sceptics and infidels pass from unbelief to faith in God and in His Word, and so must be a matter of very secondary importance, and the historic credibility of the narratives all that need to be contended for,—nothing beyond this being indispensable. On this point, however, I shall content myself with simply quoting the following from the late Dr. Bannerman's incomparable work on Inspiration (p. 110):—

"If the Bible is to subdue all under it with authority, it must speak with a divine voice; if the understanding is to yield up its opinions and the conscience to rectify its beliefs in homage to its word, it must be known to be the Word of the Most High; the surrender of thought and feeling, and obedience which it claims can be a willing surrender only to the presence and the power of God. No Bible uninspired, and therefore unauthoritative, can do this."

The only other passage to which I shall call your attention as proving that the author of this sermon is, to say the least of it, not thoroughly persuaded of the supernatural inspiration of all the human authors of the Bible, is that on p. 4:—"I can say "little or nothing about the inspiration of the prophets. . . Similarly of the apostles. I of course believe they are the authoritative teachers of the Church, and that in order to fit them to "be so, special revelations were made to them, and therefore, in "their case also, I desire, as Paul himself obviously did" (where does Paul say anything to warrant such an assertion?), "to bring "the revelations made by God into the foreground, and to allow "the inspired state of the human mind to fall back into a secondary place."

In this extract, the writer tells us that he believes that the apostles were the "authoritative teachers of the Church," and

that, in order to fit them to be so, "special revelations were made "to them." Do we not then find Paul, one of these authoritative teachers, authoritatively declaring (2 Tim. iii. 16), and that of course as having been specially revealed to him by God, that "all Scripture," meaning thereby primarily the Scriptures of the Old Testament, "is given by inspiration of God"? Does not the apostle Peter, another of these authoritative teachers, assure us (2 Peter i. 21), that the "prophecy came not in old time by the "will of man; but holy men of God" (that is the prophets) "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"? How, with such express testimonies to the fact, by those whom he believed to be the authoritative teachers of the Church, especially when taken in connection with the way in which Christ Himself invariably spoke of the Old Testament Scriptures, the writer of this sermon should be unable to say whether the prophets were supernaturally inspired or not, it is impossible to understand.

Equally impossible is it to comprehend how he should be at any loss as to the supernatural inspiration of these authoritative teachers themselves, especially the apostle Paul. For not only does this apostle repeatedly and most positively affirm that the things which he spoke and wrote had been supernaturally made known to him by the Holy Spirit, but he also declares that he spoke and wrote these things "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing "spiritual things with spiritual," that is, as Alford explains it, "attaching spiritual words to spiritual things." Not only so, but he also affirmed that the gospel which he preached was not the word of man, but the word of God. Do we not in like manner find the apostle Peter (2 Peter iii. 16) putting the epistles of Paul on a footing of equality, in respect of character and divine authority, with the "other Scriptures" of the Old Testament, and not only so, but speaking (2 Peter iii. 2) of the commandments of himself and the other apostles as being of equal divine authority with the words of the "holy prophets," and declaring that the apostles and evangelists preached the gospel "with the "Holy Ghost sent down from heaven"? But, in short, although the author of this sermon denies, at least indirectly, the divine, supernatural inspiration of Paul and the other writers of the New Testament, and so might more properly have entitled his sermon "Revelation without Inspiration," nothing is clearer or more certain than that they themselves, and all the followers of Christ among whom they lived and moved, believed that they were not only the divinely authorized, but the divinely and supernaturally inspired teachers of the Church. In proof of this, in so far at least as Paul is concerned, we have only to read what he says in 1 Cor. ii. 1-16; Eph. iii. 1-7; 1 Thess. ii. 13; iv. 1, 2, 8, 15; and 2 Thess. ii. 13-15.

In regard to the inspiration of the writers of the Gospels, I shall content myself with quoting the following from Dr. Bannerman (p. 392):—"The biography of the Son of God, declaring

"aright what He was, and narrating truly what He said and did, "could not have been written except by that same Spirit who "was from the beginning one with Him in nature; and therefore, "adequately understood His mind, His thoughts, His words, and "His life." "For what man," says Paul, "knoweth the things of "a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the "things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

But I have said enough to make it manifest that, according to the teaching of this sermon, the writers of the Holy Scriptures neither were, nor needed to be, specially and miraculously inspired, that is, qualified and enabled to record the revelations given them.

Equally obvious is it, as the following quotations will show, that, as previously stated, these writers were liable, in writing the Scriptures, to make mistakes, and actually did make mistakes; and that, as the result, the Holy Scriptures, as originally written, contained such inaccuracies as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory, and so never were possessed of absolute infallibility—never were in every part and particular a record of infallible truth and divine authority.

Thus, at page 24, speaking of the apostle Paul, the author thus writes—"I will not deny that he was occasionally wrong in a date."

At page 17, the Bible is thus spoken of:—"It has been considered infallible not only in regard to the revelation it contains, "but in regard to the whole form in which that revelation is conveyed to us, and so when errors and imperfections have been "pointed out, those whose faith has rested on its verbal and universal infallibility have received a violent shock as if revelation "itself were being brought into danger."

It is clear from this extract that the writer does not regard the Bible as infallible in regard to "the whole form" in which the revelation it contains is conveyed to us, but holds that it contains "errors and imperfections." That it is not of MS. copies of the Bible that the author here speaks, but of the original record as it came from the hands of the inspired authors, is evident from the fact that no one denies that, through the carelessness or ignorance of subsequent transcribers, verbal errors of a trifling nature have crept in. I am sure, moreover, that the author himself will not deny that it is to the original writings that he here refers.

It may be imagined too by some, that the "errors and imperfections" of which the author speaks, have reference simply to the way in which some matters of geology and astronomy are spoken of, and to instances of alleged bad grammar on the part of some of the writers who were not very polished or learned. The following quotations, however, from the preface, p. 8, will make it abundantly plain that the supposed errors and imperfections to which he refers are of a very different character:—

"I say plainly, that if I supposed the Confession to mean what Dr. Hodge says it means, I could not accept it. Dr. Hodge, on p. 55 of his Commentary

on the Confession, and speaking of Inspiration, says : ‘The nature of this Divine influence we, of course, can no more understand than we can in the case of any other miracle. But the effects are plain and certain, viz., that all written under it is the very word of God, of infallible truth, and of Divine authority ; and this infallibility and authority attach as well to the verbal expression in which the revelation is conveyed as to the matter of the revelation itself.’ This I distinctly deny. In presence of the facts, no such infallibility can be made out, and no such theory could ever have been formed from an unbiassed consideration of what the various writers of Scripture say of themselves. No careful student of Scripture can well deny that there are inaccuracies in the gospels and elsewhere—inaccuracies such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory. These are trifling, it will be said. Certainly they are trifling ; so trifling as in no appreciable degree to damage the historicity or trustworthiness of Scripture, but sufficient entirely to explode the averment of literal infallibility. What is infallibility but incapacity to err ? Unless we are prepared to go as far as Hodge—which I fancy few men will be found hardy enough to do—we must give up the claim of absolute, thoroughgoing, literal infallibility.” “I believe the Scriptures contain an infallible rule of faith and life, I believe they are the authoritative records of the revelations which God has made, but it is impossible to affirm that all the statements contained in Scripture are strictly accurate, impossible, that is, to claim for Scripture an absolute infallibility.”

Need I give any more quotations to demonstrate the truth of what has been averred in regard to the views propounded in the publication before us. Not only does the author, in the extracts just given, distinctly deny that all written under the influence of the Inspiration of which Dr. Hodge speaks, is the very word of God, of infallible truth and of divine authority, but he very confidently maintains that “no careful student of Scripture can well deny” that, as the result “of imperfect information or lapse of memory,” there are such inaccuracies in the gospels and elsewhere as are sufficient entirely to explode the averment of literal infallibility, that is, as explained in the following sentence, infallibility in the literal sense of the word, viz., incapacity to err ; and not only so, but very confidently asserts that it is impossible to affirm that all the statements contained in Scripture are strictly accurate, or to claim for Scripture, even as originally written, an absolute infallibility. Language could not be either more explicit, or more dogmatical. So confident indeed is the author of the accuracy of his views, and of the unassailable character of his position in maintaining them, that, in venturing to call them in question, and to maintain the opposite, every one who differs from him runs a risk of being set down as not “a careful student of Scripture,” and not only so, but regarded as a presumptuous novice who “has thought too little, and is unwilling to think much” upon the subject.

I must be allowed therefore, to remind the Court of the fact, that the greatest theologians, and the most careful and diligent students of the Bible in Christendom, downwards from the days of the apostles, have held and advocated views the very opposite of those propounded in this sermon.

Should this statement be questioned, I am prepared to substantiate it by ample quotations from the writings of Origen,

Augustine, Calvin, Turretine, Dr. Owen, Scott the commentator, Principal Cunningham, Principal Candlish, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Bannermann, Dr. Duncan, Rev. Marcus Dods, Principal Fairbairn, Dr. Eadie, Haldane, Gaussen, Dr. Leonard Wood of America, Dr. C. Hodge, Dr. A. A. Hodge, Dr. Lee of Dublin, Dr. Westcott of Cambridge, Spurgeon, and many others.

But not with the views of these theologians only are the views of the author of this sermon completely at variance. They are also directly opposed to the doctrine taught upon the subject in the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which we have all solemnly pledged adherence. Thus, in chap. I. section 1, it is declared, that "it pleased the Lord, at sundry times and divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards . . . to commit the same wholly to writing." In these words, not the revelation of Himself only, but the committing of that revelation to writing, is ascribed directly to the Lord—the one as much and as directly and immediately as the other; so that the Lord, according to the Confession of Faith, is as much, and as fully, the author of the record of the revelation, as He is of the revelation itself; and if so, then that record, in other words, the Bible, must be entirely free from inaccuracies and mistakes, as free as the revelation which it embodies; for we cannot dare to say that anything written by the Lord—any writing of which God is the author—can be imperfect or inaccurate. In direct opposition to this, however, the writer of this sermon maintains that the record referred to, the Bible, is imperfect, and does contain "inaccuracies such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory;" and, therefore, cannot be as really and as completely the work of God as the revelation it contains.

In section 2 of this same chapter of the Confession, it is declared that "Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the Books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these—Genesis, Exodus," &c. (giving the names of them as contained in our Bibles) "all which," it is added, "are given by inspiration of God, to be," not simply to contain, "the rule of faith and life."

Here we have the Holy Scriptures not only expressly declared to be—not the word of man—not the word of prophets or of apostles merely, but the Word of God—the Word of God written, having been, through the instrumentality of men, committed to writing by the Lord himself; but all the books of the Old and New Testaments declared to have been "given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life." Having been thus given, and being thus not the word of man, but the Word of God, the Scriptures as a whole must be a perfect and an infallible rule. Accordingly they are actually declared to be so in section 9.

So far, however, is the writer of this sermon from regarding them in this light, that he declares that "it is impossible to affirm that all the statements contained in Scripture are strictly

accurate—impossible, that is, to claim for Scripture an absolute infallibility.”

This, however, is just what the authors of the Confession do claim for Scripture. Thus in section 4 of this first chapter the authorship of holy Scripture is unequivocally ascribed to God, He being, in express terms, declared to be “the author thereof.” But surely if God, who, as declared in this section, is “truth itself,” is the author of Scripture, it must be possessed of “absolute infallibility,” and all its statements be “strictly accurate.”

Accordingly, in section 5th, “the Holy Scripture” is spoken of as being a record of “infallible truth and divine authority.” Nevertheless, the writer of this sermon declares that “there are ‘inaccuracies in the gospels and elsewhere sufficient entirely to ‘explode the averment of infallibility.’”

It will be seen from section 8th that it is of the Scriptures as originally given that the infallible truth and divine authority of which the authors of the Confession speak, are predicated. Although, as declared in this same section, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have, by God’s singular care and providence, been kept “pure” in all ages—that is, preserved from the introduction of any error in doctrine or fact—no one pretends that, at this distance of time, and when the original documents are lost, we have in every instance the very *letter*, or even the very *word*, that was originally written.

Even as regards the original documents, no intelligent defender of plenary inspiration and absolute infallibility would ever think of denying that difficulties of various kinds, apparent discrepancies, and seeming contradictions have from the first been found in them—difficulties which it may not be possible with our present knowledge of the facts fully to solve, and apparent discrepancies or contradictions which we may not be able completely to clear up or harmonize. The presence, however, of such difficulties or apparent discrepancies is by no means incompatible with the plenary inspiration or absolute infallibility of the Scriptures; nor would any one intelligently acquainted with the subject ever think for a moment of adducing them as a proof of the contrary, and just because “it is impossible,” as Dr. Bannerman remarks (p. 559) “to assert and to prove that any one of those difficulties which appear to be the most formidable, and confessedly remain unexplained, is inexplicable.” “It is impossible to say in regard to any one difficulty which at present ‘presses upon Scripture interpretation, that no amount of additional knowledge that God could give would clear up all that ‘now waits explanation, or shed light on what is now confessedly ‘enveloped in darkness. And if it be impossible to prove this ‘in any case, the probability that the difficulty or apparent contradiction is really due to our ignorance, is much greater than ‘the presumption that it results from untruth in the case of the ‘sacred volume.” The course, therefore, which true philosophy,

no less than Christian wisdom, dictates as that which ought invariably to be followed in regard to all such difficulties and apparent contradictions is that which Justin Martyr, as recorded by Dr. Lee of Dublin in his very learned work (p. 84), adopted when pressed by a Jewish opponent to allow the existence of contradictions in the Bible: "I dare not," he replied, "either 'imagine or assert that the Scriptures contradict each other; 'but were any passage to be adduced which has even the 'semblance of being opposed to another, being altogether persuaded that no such opposition really exists, I will rather 'confess that I myself do not understand what is said.'"

A remark or two on one other point, and I am done. At pages 6 and 7 of the preface we find the following extraordinary explanation of the history of belief in one's own mind:—

"There need be no mystery about the actual history of belief in one's own mind. An Epistle of Paul's comes into my hands, and I find that the writer claims to have received a revelation and to be specially commissioned to teach it. But do I at once accept his statement, or how do I know that this is a true representation? I read on and am convinced. I believe he has received a revelation, because to me it is a revelation; (!) and I accept him as authoritative because his claim is consistent. (?) I may not be able at once to accept all he teaches; I cannot accept it merely because it comes to me with authority. I can only accept in doctrine that which fits itself in with my previously received ideas and my stage of mental growth. When the doctrine of the Trinity is conveyed to me, I accept this because I find in it the root which the facts of redemption require. But if as yet I have not received the leading facts of redemption, I shall be unable to accept the doctrine of the Trinity, on whatsoever authority announced. (!) But having accepted Paul or any one as an authoritative teacher, it is of course at my own risk I disagree with him in any one particular. He remains the authority and not I. And so long as there remains in his writings something which I cannot accept and assimilate to the rest of my belief, I hold his authority over my own head as a warning, and seek through the Apostle to attain to the very mind of Christ Himself."

The *rationale* here given of the rise and progress of belief in the divine truth of any statement or doctrine of the Bible, I regard as utterly inconsistent with the actual facts of the case, and feel thoroughly persuaded that no one ever was, or ever will be, brought in the way indicated to a believing reception of any portion or doctrine of Scripture as the very truth of God. Not only so, but I am utterly at a loss to conceive how the writer of these statements can reconcile the sentiments expressed in them with the doctrine of the 4th section of chap. i. of the Confession of Faith. "The authority of the Holy Scripture," it is therein declared, "for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but 'wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and 'therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."

According to the authors of the Confession, it is with God, the divine author, that we are brought into contact when dealing with any portion of Scripture, and not merely with Paul, or any of the other human authors. It is to the character and authority

of God, as speaking to us in it, and not to that of the human writer that we are to have respect: and it is on His authority, and on that alone, that we are to believe and obey that which is therein addressed to us.

According to the statement just quoted, it is simply with the human author that we have to do. God is not once mentioned from beginning to end of it. Paul is the only one whose authority is recognized. The authority, it is true, which is attributed to him, is possessed, even in the writer's own opinion and experience, of very little weight or influence. For he tells us that, even after he has believed that Paul "has received a revelation," and has accepted him as an "authoritative teacher, specially "commissioned to teach" that revelation, he cannot accept what he teaches, merely because it comes to him with authority—"he can only accept in doctrine that which fits itself in with his previously received ideas, and his stage of mental growth."

In dealing with a brother, who was understood to have declared that, if certain doctrines were taught in the Bible, he would reject them as conflicting with the dictates of reason and the moral sense, the U. P. Presbytery of Edinburgh felt called upon to require from him an answer to the following question:—"When we have arrived at a thorough understanding of the "meaning and design of any passage of Scripture, are we not "bound to receive the doctrine it contains as the authoritative "revelation of the mind of God to us, in the subject to which it "relates, whether it coincides with our preconceptions, or with "the dictates of our reason or not?" Is there not but too much room for some such question being put to the author of this sermon, in connection with the statements just referred to?

The sentiments expressed in this last quotation furnish a very striking instance and illustration of the baneful influence which the views propounded in this sermon are fitted from their very nature to exert.

No sooner does a person adopt these views, and begin to believe that there are "inaccuracies in the Bible, such as occur in "ordinary writings through imperfect information, or lapse of "memory," than he comes to it not as a humble disciple, to hear what God the Lord would say unto him; but "as a master to "sit in judgment on it as sisted to his bar, and bound to render "up to him a confession of its errors, and not a declaration of its "one and authoritative truth." Not this only, but no one who denies the plenary, supernatural inspiration of the Bible, and believes that there are mistakes in it such as occur in ordinary writings, can ever feel certain that any portion of the Holy Scriptures is the infallible truth and Word of God. This, and nothing short of this, is the natural and necessary result of the adoption of the views published to the world, defended and commended to the acceptance of all, by the author of this sermon. Hence it is that I regard them as so very dangerous; regard them as fitted to undermine all faith in the infallible truth and

divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and thus to subvert the very foundations of Christianity ; fitted not to turn sceptics into believers, as the author vainly imagines, but to make believers sceptics. Hence it is that I have felt it to be my duty to submit to the Presbytery the motion now on the table.

S P E E C H I I.

FREE PRESBYTERY HOUSE,
27th November, 1877.

THE first point with which my motion * deals particularly, is the

* The three motions submitted in the first instance to the Presbytery were the following :—

1st, Dr. Adam's in these terms—"The Presbytery approve of the report of the committee now submitted, and, in accordance with the conclusions of it, find that the sermon of Dr. Dods is open to grave objection in the respect, and on the grounds specified in the report ; also, that for the reasons there stated the desirableness of not continuing the publication of the sermon, at least in its present form, should be represented, as it hereby is, to Dr. Dods ; but, at the same time, they find that they are not called to institute any process, or take any further action in the matter."

2nd, My own, as an amendment to Dr. Adam's—"Whereas the sermon and preface referred to in the report now on the table contain numerous very objectionable statements and opinions ; whereas, in particular, the direct or indirect denial in said sermon and preface of the miraculous inspiration of the sacred writers, and of the plenary inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, and the assertion that the inspiration of the sacred writers was simply a spiritual gift, and that the Bible contains errors and inaccuracies such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory, are contrary to, or inconsistent with the testimony of Scripture, the teaching of the Confession of Faith, and the doctrine hitherto held and professed by this Church, fitted to subvert all faith in the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and therefore deserving of the decided condemnation of the Presbytery ; and whereas, nevertheless, the committee by whom the aforesaid report was prepared and submitted to the Presbytery, while taking exception more or less strongly to the language occasionally employed in said sermon and preface, to the speculations occasionally indulged in, and to the mode and form adopted in some instances by the author in the representation of his views, do not see anything seriously objectionable in the views themselves, or express any condemnation of them ; but, on the contrary, apologise for them, and even vindicate and defend the author in holding them, declaring them to be such as have been held and advocated by the ablest and most orthodox theologians, and therefore recommend the Presbytery to take no further action in regard to them—the Presbytery, on the foregoing grounds, decline to approve of the said report or to adopt the recommendation with which it concludes, strongly condemn the aforesaid views, censure the publication of them as fitted to be most unsettling and injurious, especially to the young, enjoin the author to withdraw the sermon and preface in which they are promulgated from publication, and appoint a committee to confer with him as to the views in question and to report."

3rd, Dr. A. Bonar's in these terms—"The Presbytery receive the report, and record their thanks to the convener and committee. In the line of the

character of the views propounded in this sermon* regarding the inspiration of the writers of the Holy Scriptures, and regarding the infallibility of the Scriptures. The ground I take is, that the teaching of this sermon on these points is contrary to, or inconsistent with the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the doctrines of this Church. Could I not take this ground, I should not feel warranted in occupying a position of antagonism to the sermon at all, or in moving a single hairsbreadth in the line of its condemnation. Nor can I see on what other ground any minister or member of this Church is entitled to give any judicial disapproval of the sermon, or to enjoin, or even to call for its withdrawal. It is only when we take our stand upon the Word of God, and the subordinate standards of the Church, and to the extent to which we are warranted in doing so, that the author of this sermon can justly be required or reasonably expected to bow to any decision to which we may come.

This, however, by the way. The question with which I have specially to deal is this,—Is it really the fact, as alleged in my motion, that the teaching of this sermon is such as it is there declared to be? That it is so, I have no more doubt than I have that I am now addressing this Presbytery. Nothing, did time permit, could be more easily or conclusively demonstrated. All, however, that I mean to do is simply to indicate in what the contrariety or inconsistency between the teaching of the sermon on the one hand, and the teaching of the Scriptures, the "Confession of Faith," and the Church, on the other, consists. Now, I presume, it will be admitted that, speaking where I now speak, I am entitled to assume that the doctrine of Scripture, of the "Confession of Faith," and of this Church, on the points in question is identical. What, then, is that doctrine? It is, as I understand it, that the writers of the Holy Scriptures were so specially and miraculously qualified by the Holy Spirit for the reception or selection of the facts and truths which God willed to constitute his written Word, and so constantly and effectually guided and assisted by Him in the reception or selection of these facts and truths, and in committing them to writing, that only that which God willed to be thus committed to writing was actually written by them. In no instance were they to any extent left to themselves, or to their own unaided resources. In all their official sayings and doings they enjoyed the special miraculous assistance and direction of the Holy Spirit. "Holy men of God," we are assured, "spake" and wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This, moreover, held as true

strictures of the report, the Presbytery disapprove of the sermon and preface, especially of those parts that seem to limit the sphere, and lower the idea of inspiration; as also of those that appear to assert the existence of real errors in the Holy Scriptures as originally given, and they intimate to the author that they regard it as his duty not to carry the publication any farther."

* When the sermon is spoken of, the preface is included.

of the writers of the New Testament as it did of those of the Old.

Hence it was that the apostles, although already spiritual men, were enjoined to tarry at Jerusalem until they should be endued with the supernatural, miraculous power of the Holy Spirit from on high—obviously implying that until thus endued they were not qualified for the work given them to do. Hence, also, it is that the apostles not only speak of the Holy Spirit as testifying in the Old Testament prophets of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that should follow, and declaring that “all (Old Testament) scripture was given by inspiration of God,” but also affirming that they themselves preached the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and that they did so, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. In short, the writers of the Bible everywhere speak of themselves as having, in the performance of their official work, enjoyed the special miraculous assistance and direction of the Holy Spirit—so much so that what they taught God taught, and what they wrote God wrote. At the same time, when thus engaged in committing to writing the facts and truths God willed them to record, they were left as completely to the full and unfettered use of all their mental faculties, and to the employment of their own style and mode of expression, as if they had enjoyed no such divine direction or assistance at all, but been left entirely to themselves.

The result is that, unlike any other book in existence, the Bible is possessed throughout of a double authorship—a divine authorship, and a human authorship—so much so, that on the one hand, it is as truly and perfectly the word and work of God as if man had had nothing to do with it, and it had, like the ten commandments, been written by the finger of God Himself, and on the other, as truly and perfectly the word and work of man as if God had taken no part in it. Accordingly, in the first chapter of the Confession of Faith, as shown on a former occasion, it is not only declared that all the books of the Old and New Testaments were given by immediate inspiration of God, but that God is the Author of them. Not only so, but the committing to writing of the revelation of Himself and of His will contained in the Scriptures, is also expressly ascribed to Him. “It pleased the Lord,” it is declared in section first, “at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church, and afterwards to commit the same wholly unto writing.”

Here it will be observed, that not the revelation of Himself only, but the committing of that revelation to writing, is directly ascribed to the Lord—the one as much, and as immediately and directly, as the other, so that, according to the Confession of Faith, the Lord is as much the Author of the record of the revelation as He is of the revelation itself. In these circumstances, that record—viz., the Holy Scriptures—must, in respect

of its verbal framework, be as entirely free from errors and inaccuracies as the revelation it embodies. If God who, as declared in section fourth, "is *truth itself*," is "the Author of the Scriptures," and if these Scriptures are, as declared in sections second and fourth, "the *Word of God* written," they must be possessed of "absolute infallibility," and all their statements be "strictly accurate." In every respect they must be that, and only that which God willed them to be. This, accordingly, is just what in section 5 is predicated of the Scriptures as the Word of God." They are declared to be characterized by "infallible truth and divine authority."

Such, I submit, is a correct representation of the doctrine of the Word of God on the one hand, and of the Confession of Faith on the other, in regard to the special miraculous inspiration of the writers of the Scriptures, and to the perfect accuracy and infallible truth of these Scriptures, as that doctrine has hitherto been held and professed by this Church. That it is so will by and by be made abundantly evident by quotations from the writings of men whom all must acknowledge to have been the ablest and most competent expounders of the doctrine of the Church on the points in question.

Meantime, let me endeavour briefly to show how completely at variance with all this the views propounded in this sermon are. In order to be able to exhibit fully the author's views on the questions at issue, one would require to quote almost the whole of what he says from page 19 to page 25 of the sermon, and on pages 8, 9, and 10 of the preface. I take it for granted, however, that this is unnecessary, and shall content myself with simply giving a *vidimus*—first, of what is taught in regard to the character of the inspiration of the writers of the Bible, and then of the character of the Bible as the result of that inspiration.

Here, as I have been charged with misunderstanding and misrepresenting the opinions of the author, and mixing up what he meant to be regarded as questions of revelation with questions of inspiration, I must be allowed to ask the Presbytery to note that although, at the top of page 19, he professes to inquire into the special equipment of those who were chosen to record the revelations which God made, he confines his attention almost exclusively to the way in which they received these revelations, and says but little or nothing as to the way in which they were enabled to record them. So much is this the case, that the question he proposed to answer should not have been, "What was the special equipment of the sacred writers for *recording* the revelations given them?" but "What was their special equipment for *receiving* these revelations?" or, in other words, their special equipment for obtaining a knowledge of the facts, incidents, and truths which they had been chosen to commit to writing.

This, at least, is the question to which the author almost ex-

clusively confines his attention. And what is the answer he gives to it? He gives us, first, their personal qualifications, and, secondly, their providential qualifications, and then shows how these combined to produce the Scriptures.

In the first place, they were "spiritual men," possessed of a high degree of spirituality of mind. They had "given themselves up to God," and been "emptied of self-seeking and worldly ways of looking at things." They were "in sympathy with the purposes of God" and "imbued with his Spirit." They "had the Spirit of Christ," as every true believer has, and so "coincided with him as to what was important and what was little in his life."

In the second place, they had "held lifelong fellowship with God." "They had kept company with the Lord in his lifetime." They had their "knowledge of the facts" to be recorded "at first hand." "They were the men before whom the revelation was made." They were "eye-witnesses," or "had their facts from those who were so."

The result was that they "were so impressed" with what they thus saw and knew, and had such a perception of "its meaning" and importance, that they were "moved to preserve and perpetuate this impression for the sake of others."

This, and only this, according to this sermon, was the special equipment of the evangelists, and other historical writers of scripture "for recording the revelations given them."

Now, it must be obvious to all that there is nothing supernatural or miraculous in all this—nothing more than a high degree of enlightening, sanctifying grace, such as may be possessed by any believer, combined with exceptionally favourable opportunities of becoming acquainted in the ordinary way with the facts to be recorded.

Nor, in fact, is anything supernatural or miraculous here claimed for these sacred writers. Not only so, but they are represented as themselves indirectly denying that they either needed or enjoyed any such miraculous assistance. "Never," it is alleged, "do they (the apostles) ask us to take their word "for a thing which they had not good means of knowing in the "ordinary way, or come before us as men who, by a process "called inspiration, were made aware of facts which had not "come within their own observation or knowledge; neither do "they bid us accept their testimony as infallible"—all which, as formerly demonstrated, is directly contrary to the facts of the case.*

Such, according to this sermon, is the so-called inspiration of the writers of the historical portions of the Bible. There is not an iota of the miraculous or supernatural in it. The view here given of it is purely and essentially rationalistic.

Nor is the view given us of the inspiration of the prophets and apostles a whit more satisfactory. "I can say little or nothing,"

* See page 10.

the author declares, "about the inspiration of the prophets." "Similarly of the apostles." "I desire, as Paul himself obviously 'did, to bring the revelations made by God into the foreground, 'and to allow the inspired state of the human mind to fall back 'into a secondary place.'" "I, for my part, do not care what 'meaning a man attaches to the word 'inspired,' nor indeed, 'whether he says these epistles are inspired or not, so long as he 'accepts their teaching."

But if this was the only inspiration which the writers of the Holy Scriptures enjoyed, then, as it is incident to men, even the most spiritually minded, to err, it is very obvious that it could neither be a perfect safeguard to themselves against errors and mistakes in what they wrote, nor a perfect guarantee to us of the absolute infallibility of their writings. Nor, in fact, according to this sermon, was it either the one or the other. Not only, it is declared, were they liable to make mistakes, but they actually did so. The result accordingly is, that the Bible contains such errors and inaccuracies as are to be found "in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory," and so is not and cannot be possessed of absolute infallibility. In proof of these statements, I need only refer you to what is quoted from the sermon in the first paragraph of the third section of the Committee's Report.*

Such, then, are the views in regard to the inspiration of the writers of the Holy Scriptures, and to the infallibility of these Scriptures, set forth in this sermon. These views I maintain are not only utterly inconsistent with, but directly contrary to what we have just seen is the doctrine of the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the teaching of this Church; and I cannot but regard it as a grievous calamity, and a cause of deep humiliation to our Church, that such views should ever have been promulgated from a Free Church pulpit, or from a Free Church pen. And what I look upon as even more deplorable, is that the promulgation of these views is not only apologized for, but vindicated by those who occupy the high places of our Zion. It was not thus in other days. How different the teaching of those who were at once the acknowledged representatives, and the special ornaments of the Free Church. Hear for example, what Dr. Chalmers, as quoted by the Rev. Mr. Knight, in the *Daily Review* of December 7, 1877, says:—

"A pure influx of supernatural revelation is no guarantee for the faith of the world, but a pure efflux is that with which alone we have to do or can take cognisance of. A partial inspiration would imply that the Word may not be pure at the very point where the great purpose of the revelation was to be fulfilled. Strange that here it should be corrupted when its grand object is to enlighten us—that it should come purely to the writers, and impurely to that world to which they ministered."

To the same effect is what the late Principal Fairbairn says on

* See Appendix, page 47.

the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, in his article on inspiration in the "Imperial Bible Dictionary," page 788:—

"On the supposition that the sacred writers were sincere and honest men seeking to convey, not for sophists and disputers, but to plain and simple minded persons like themselves, an impression in accordance with the native import of their words—no conclusion may be more certainly drawn, than that, according to their representations, Scripture in its totality—the collection as a whole, and each particular part of it—was given by inspiration of God, and is in consequence to be regarded as the peculiar and authoritative revelation of his will to man."

"The doctrine of the Catholic Church," says Dr. Bannerman, in his work on Inspiration, page 211, "has ever recognized in the written text, as it came from the pens of its authors, and viewed as distinct from the revelation contained in it, the same purity that belongs to its source," (that is, God), "and an infallibility free from addition or admixture of human error." "They," (the writers of the Holy Scriptures), he says again at page 436, "were made by inspiration infallible in all that they wrote, and entirely exempted from the possibility of human error." "The supernatural element," he says again, page 443, "in its reality and perfection as supernatural, was present throughout the WHOLE of Scripture to give to ALL of it the equal seal of divine truth, and the like stamp of divine authority. . . . The allegation that any part of Scripture, even in the case where the facts or truths were best known beforehand to the writers, could have been written without supernatural inspiration, so as to have been what it now is,—the very truth of God, and not of man,—and to have carried with it, what it now carries,—a divine and not a human authority,—is an allegation entirely unfounded."

"The Spirit," says the late Principal Cunningham, "Sermons," page 43, "dictated 'the Scriptures,' using as his instruments those who are commonly considered and called the authors of the respective books, not preventing or wholly suspending the use of their natural faculties, as is proved by the obvious variety of styles which appears in the different books of Scripture,—varieties which can sometimes be traced distinctly to the education and condition of the particular authors, and which are in all cases individual peculiarities, but so operating in and through their faculties, so guiding and superintending them, as that the work composed by them, under His influence, was in every respect and altogether, the transcript of the mind of the Spirit—an exact revelation of the will of God."

"What," says the late Principal Candlish in his Lecture on "the Authority and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," in "Reason and Revelation," pp. 22, 23, "are we to understand by the Inspiration of the Bible? To this I answer generally, that I hold it to be an infallible divine guidance exercised over those who are commissioned to declare the mind of God, so as to secure that in declaring it they do not err. What they say or write under this guidance, is as truly said and written by God, through them, as if their instrumentality were not used at all. God is in the fullest sense responsible for every word of it." . . . "They (the books of the Bible) are all His writings: He is responsible for every word of every one of them," (page 31). . . . "The uniform manner of speaking of the Old Testament which we trace in the sayings and writings of Christ and His apostles in the New—is such as to be wholly incompatible with any other idea than that of its full and verbal inspiration: and cannot but convey to a simple reader the impression that they regarded every word of that (the Old) Testament as divine," (p. 36).

"But now," he says again in his Lecture on the Infallibility of Holy Scripture in the same work, pp. 70 and 71, "admitting and thankfully rejoicing in this fact" (viz. that of our having the truth of the gospel presented to us by different men, looking at it from different standpoints, and conceiving of it somewhat differently from one another), "I urge it as what to my mind is one of the strongest of all arguments for the full and infallible inspiration of the apostolic writings. I cannot bring myself to believe that when God meant to reveal His will to me, to you, to all in a matter, not of life and death merely,

but of life and death for eternity . . . and when for that purpose He engaged the minds and pens of men, who, being men, could at the very best know it themselves only in part ; . . . He left these men to write without a superintendence and unerring oversight that would secure the literal and verbal accuracy of every sentence they composed ; its being literally and verbally correct and true. I will not do my God so great a wrong as to imagine that He could so act.

"I may have to admit that there are difficulties in connection with these precious remains, which I have not, in this remote age and country, the means of solving. But I, for one, will be no maker of difficulties—no eager finder of them ; nor will I make too much of them when they force themselves upon me. I will not refuse a probable, or even a possible explanation of them, merely because it does not clear up all, and make all certain. And most assuredly, even in a desperate case, I shall consider it infinitely more probable that there is some mistake on my part—some error in my way of looking at the matter that a few simple words from the writers would at once remove it—and will remove it when I meet them in a better world—than that either they should have undertaken, or that God should have permitted them, to handle, as His authorised ambassadors, and the authoritative teachers of His Church in all ages, the deep things of His righteousness and peace in any other words than those which His own Holy Spirit sanctioned and approved."

"That is the very argument," Dr. C. further declares (Preface, p. 9), "that I have urged at some length for our belief that all 'parts of Scripture must be recorded with strict verbal accuracy,' if we are to be sure of our having what is 'essential.' Or to put the statement in better Theology if not in better English, I have argued that God, giving to us a Revelation of His mind and will, in the manner in which it has seemed good to Him to give it—that is, mixed up with mundane affairs and the sayings and doings of men—secures its full and accurate conveyance to us—and can secure that—only by Himself taking the oversight throughout of the very words in which the whole complex record is framed This at all events is consistent with the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of all Scripture which I hold. And it is inconsistent with the idea of our distinguishing as to inspiration, between the essential and the non-essential in Scripture which I repudiate and abhor."

"Believing," (Preface, p. 15), "that every word of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures—so far of course as the right reading of texts can be critically ascertained—is divine as well as human ; that every word of the Bible is what it is and where it is by the direct will of the Holy Spirit, as truly as by the purpose of the writer ; that the Holy Spirit is responsible for its being what it is and where it is : that it is the Holy Spirit's word as much as the writer's. Only the Holy Spirit does not supersede the writer, or make him write unnaturally. That is really all."

"I avow it (Preface, p. 21) as my sole aim" (that is, in his Lectures on Revelation and Inspiration) "to advocate as best I may the great truth on which the religion of Christ and the hopes of Christians depend—that not only is the Word of God in the Bible, but that the Bible is itself in the strictest and fullest sense, in every particular of its contents and in every expression which it uses, the infallible word of the one only living and true God."

Such is a specimen, and but a specimen of what has hitherto been held and declared from the pulpits and professorial chairs of the Free Church, in regard to the nature and extent of the inspiration of the writers of the Holy Scriptures, and to the absolute infallibility of these Scriptures. It will be admitted that these quotations most fully bear out all that has just been advanced as to the teaching of Scripture, the Confession of Faith, and the Free Church upon the points in question ; and that

more competent witnesses could not easily be adduced. Equally obvious must it be that, if the views of these representative men be a correct exhibition of the teaching of the Bible, and also of the Confession of Faith, the views propounded in this sermon are directly contrary to both; and, therefore, as declared in my motion, fitted to subvert all faith in the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible as the Word of God. I am very far indeed, from saying, or thinking that the author intended what he has written to have any such effect. It is not, however, with the intentions of the author that we have to do, in judging of the character and tendency of the contents of his sermon, but with the contents themselves. If, therefore, the fact "that not only is the Word of God in the Bible, but that the Bible is itself, in the strictest and fullest sense, in every particular of its contents and in every expression which it uses, the infallible word of the one only living and true God," be, as declared by Principal Candlish in the last quoted extract, "the great truth on which the religion of Christ and the hopes of Christians depend," then unquestionably the views promulgated in this sermon, in which it is maintained that the inspiration of the writers of the Bible was not an influence that precluded the possibility of errors and mistakes in what they wrote, and that "it is impossible to affirm that all the statements contained in Scripture are strictly accurate, impossible, that is, to claim for Scripture an absolute infallibility," are fitted to subvert the faith of the Church in the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible. A fallible Bible, containing an indefinite number of errors and mistakes, is not a Bible on whose testimony I, at least, could with unwavering faith venture the eternal salvation of my soul. Nor does it mend the matter to tell me that the alleged errors and inaccuracies are of a trifling nature, and have no bearing upon matters of doctrine or duty. The all important question is, not, what is the character of the alleged inaccuracies, but are there any such inaccuracies at all. If there are, then how can I be infallibly certain that that portion of the Bible on which I am relying is not an error—a mistake—and therefore unworthy of credit. If one part is a mistake, so may another, and another. If the writers may have been mistaken in a date, so they may also in a doctrine—if mistaken as to some facts so may they have been in all. Moreover, if the writers were fallible in some things, although infallible in the great majority of the facts and truths they wrote, where is the infallible "higher criticism" to be found that will be able to separate the tares from the wheat—the false from the true? In short, I cannot but regard it as one of the cruellest mockeries to assure me that the Bible contains an infallible rule of faith and duty, and in the same breath to declare that it contains "such inaccuracies as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory."

Well may Dr. Adam declare of such inaccuracies, as he does

in the following quotation from his speech, that if they had been introduced by transcribers they would have invalidated the divine record, destroyed it as a reliable authority, and opened the way for every kind of heresy and fancy:—

“Some of our friends,” he says, “are ready to account for every thing which causes difficulty by fathering it on the transcribers of the Scriptures I maintain that few things are more perilous than to attribute to any such source inaccuracies of which there is no trace in the whole history of transcription, for by this means you invalidate the divine record, you destroy it as a reliable authority, and open the way for the defence of every kind of heresy and fancy.”

Now, this may be all very true; but surely, if trying to account for these alleged inaccuracies, and to explain apparent inconsistencies or contradictions, by attributing them to uninspired transcribers be so very perilous, to attempt to account for them by ascribing them to mistakes on the part of the original inspired writers, as the author of this sermon does, must be infinitely more so. How strange therefore that Dr. Adam, while speaking so strongly of the perilous character of the former mode of accounting for these alleged inaccuracies, should speak so gently and apologetically of the latter, as he does in the following:—

“It may be proper to state that personally I am no advocate of any such theory. I see that it is encompassed with dangers, and may lead to serious consequences. It may amount to little or it may amount to a very great deal. No doubt much depends on how it is defined and limited. What is the nature, and what is the range of the alleged inaccuracies? How, when you open the door for the entrance of small defects, can you shut it against those who would bring in all sorts of errors? But then what I contend for is that, while I may hold a stricter view of inspiration, and desire all others to do the same, I am not entitled to enforce my view on all my brethren. I see nothing in the Standards which binds or even permits me to cast out of the Church, or launch its censures against, the man who honestly adopts the theory in question, if he does so within due limits, does it in a way which does not lead him into error in other respects.”

What are these due limits? When and by whom were they fixed, and where are they to be found? What is the “way” in which I may hold that the writers of the Bible were liable to err, and that there are inaccuracies and errors in the Bible, without running any risk of being led myself, or of leading others into error in other respects? Would it not have been well before writing the above, to have answered the important question previously propounded: “How, when you open the “door for the entrance of small defects, can you shut it against “those who would bring in all sorts of errors?”

Such teaching, in short, as that contained in this sermon, I regard as most unsettling and dangerous, and deserving of the decided condemnation of the Presbytery and of the Church.

The question, therefore, now arises, “Have the committee in the Report * on the table condemned it?” They have done no

* See Appendix. p. 46.

such thing. They do, it is true, condemn somewhat strongly the language occasionally employed by the author, and disapprove of the form or mode which, from time to time, he adopts in the representation of his views, but they do not condemn or disapprove of the views themselves. At first sight they may seem to do so, but on a closer examination of the language of the Report, it will be found that they do not. There is not, from beginning to end, a single word that indicates that they look upon the sermon or preface as containing anything deserving of condemnation as being contrary to the Word of God or the Confession of Faith.

So far from this, it will be observed that in the concluding paragraph of the report, the committee, while gently hinting that, in so far as the form of the sermon is concerned, the author would "probably do well" not to carry the publication of it any further, they indirectly indicate that, in so far as the matter of it is concerned, they see no serious objection to its continued circulation.

This is not all. So far are the committee from condemning the views on inspiration promulgated in this sermon that although they "are clearly of opinion that the author has indulged in "speculation to an unwarrantable and perilous extent, regarding "the nature and mode of inspiration;" and "also think that he "has instituted comparisons and made representations which have "a tendency to limit the sphere and lower the idea of inspiration," instead of blaming him for this, they apologize for him. "It was natural for him," they say, "considering the "course and design of his argument, to bring forward and insist "much on the human element or agency in the production of "Sacred Scripture." It will be noticed, too, that the way in which the committee speak at the close of this paragraph of the report (page 47), would lead one to suppose that the author of the sermon had made certain balancing statements as to the divine authorship of the Bible, although these statements were not sufficiently explicit and prominent; whereas the fact is that, so far as I can discover, not one such balancing statement is to be found in the whole sermon—not one reference to the fact that the divine authorship underlies and shines through all the human authorship of the Bible. The part that God, by the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, had in the inspiration of the writers of Scripture is entirely ignored.

Not only so, but, although the word "supernatural" does not occur from beginning to end of the sermon or preface, the committee tell us that they "have no doubt that Dr. Dods holds "most sincerely and strongly that the Sacred Scriptures were "divinely and supernaturally inspired," and declare that "there "can be no room for difference of opinion as to his orthodoxy in "this respect." And what is the proof they adduce of this? Not anything to be found in the sermon or preface, but "a written

"communication laid before the committee," referring, I presume, to the author's reply * to the letter of inquiry addressed to him by the convener.

Now, in reference to this "written communication," I have to say that, if the author still adheres to what is contained in this sermon, then, either he uses the word "supernatural" not in the sense in which it is employed by orthodox theologians, when applied by them to inspiration, but in the sense simply of spiritual; for he distinctly declares in the passage quoted in the report that the inspiration of the apostles was simply a "spiritual gift," and "not an influence which served them instead of eyes or memory, but an influence which set them in the "right attitude towards Him they were to reflect," which just means that there was nothing supernatural, in the sense of miraculous, about it. Or, if he uses the word in the orthodox sense, then, holding as he does that there are inaccuracies in Scripture, he must hold that the inspiration of Scripture is not plenary, but partial, extending only to those portions of the Bible which he believes to be free from error. Or, if he means us to understand that the whole of the Bible is divinely and supernaturally inspired, then he must hold that the errors and inaccuracies which he alleges are contained in it are divinely and supernaturally inspired too; or, in other words, that the Bible is to a greater or less extent divinely and supernaturally erroneous. Every one, however, knows that the very design of divine supernatural inspiration is to exclude the possibility of error in anything written under its influence. It must thus, I think, appear to every unprejudiced mind that the burden which the committee have laid upon the "written communication" in question is one which it is altogether unable to sustain.

Still more unsuccessful have they been in their endeavour to vindicate the orthodoxy of the allegation that "there are inaccuracies in the gospels and elsewhere," and that "it is impossible to affirm that all the statements in Scripture are strictly "accurate—impossible, that is, to claim for Scripture an absolute "infallibility." While they tell us that in their opinion the author has given an unhappy prominence to these alleged inaccuracies, they very obviously see nothing unsound and dangerous in the belief of their existence, or in the promulgation of that belief, but are of opinion that liberty ought to be granted, not to the author of this sermon only, but to every minister of this Church, to hold and propagate the same God-dishonouring doctrines. And what is the ground on which they take up this position? It is, as they tell us in their report (page 48), that this doctrine "has been held and advocated by "theologians of the highest authority, and of world-wide reputation for orthodoxy, not less than for ability and learning." Nor do they content themselves with a mere vague allegation to that effect, but condescend upon individuals of that description,

* See Appendix, p. 52.

as having held and advocated the doctrine in question, and not only so, but quote from their writings the passages in which that doctrine, they allege, is actually advocated. In their report, page 49, they give us two lengthened quotations, the one from Dr. C. Hodge, of Princeton College, America, and the other from Scott the commentator. There are many strange things in this report, but this is the most extraordinary of all.

A more complete perversion of an author's words and meaning than that of which the authors of this report, doubtless unintentionally, have been guilty, in adducing Dr. Hodge and Scott as holding and advocating the existence of errors and inaccuracies in the Scriptures, it would be impossible to imagine. Why, sir, so far from these writers holding or advocating that there are inaccuracies in the Bible, and that in consequence of this the Bible is not absolutely infallible, they hold and advocate the very opposite, and do so avowedly. In proof of this, let me give you the following quotation from the very vol. of the work of Dr. C. Hodge from which the Committee take their quotations.

"Inspiration extends equally to all parts of Scripture. This is the fourth element of the Church doctrine on this subject. This means, first, that all the books of Scripture are equally inspired. All alike are infallible in what they teach. And secondly, that inspiration extends to all the contents of these several books. It is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to the statement of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical. It is not confined to those facts the importance of which is obvious, or which are involved in matters of doctrine. It extends to everything which any sacred writer asserts to be true."—*Systematic Theology*, vol. I., p. 163, 1871.

"The Inspiration of the Scriptures," he further declares, "extends to the words. This is included in the infallibility which our Lord ascribes to the Scriptures. . . . The thoughts are in the words. The two are inseparable. . . . Christ and His apostles argue from the very words of Scripture. . . . Constantly it is the very words of Scripture which are quoted as of divine authority. . . . The very form in which the doctrine of inspiration is taught in the Bible assumes that the organs of God" (the men he employed) "in the communication of his will, were controlled by him in the words which he used. 'I have put my words in thy mouth.' (Jer. i. 9). 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you' (Matt. x. 20). 'They spake as the Spirit gave them utterance.' 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pet. i. 21)." "All these, and similar modes of expression with which the Scriptures abound, imply that the words uttered were the words of God."

Such is the way in which Dr. Hodge expresses himself. And yet the authors of this report deliberately adduce him as holding and advocating the doctrine that there are inaccuracies in the Scriptures as originally given. Not only so, but the very words which he has written to show, in reply to the cavils and objections of sceptics and infidels, that there are no real, but only apparent, discrepancies or errors in the original documents, the Committee quote as proving that he held and advocated the existence of such errors and mistakes. Nay, they even go the length of representing the author of this sermon as

being less heterodox upon the point than even this veteran theologian "of world-wide reputation." Tell it not in Gath! But perhaps I will here be reminded of the speck of sandstone spoken of, and asked if it does not afford at least a grain of probability to the interpretation the Committee have put upon Dr. Hodge's words. No, sir, not even a grain of probability.

Just look at what he says: (1) "These apparent discrepancies, although numerous, are for the most part trivial; relating in most cases to numbers or dates." Mark, the discrepancies he is dealing with are, in his estimation, only apparent, not real, actual ones. (2) "The great majority of these are only apparent, and yield to careful examination"—that is, cease to be discrepancies even in appearance. (3) "Many of these"—that is, of the remaining apparent discrepancies—"may fairly be ascribed to errors of transcribers." (4) "The marvel and the miracle is that there are so few of these"—that is, of these alleged apparent discrepancies—"of any real importance." Mark, it is still of apparent, not of real, discrepancies that he is speaking. Some of these apparent discrepancies he admits, as every intelligent defender of the infallibility of the Bible admits, are such as, with our present knowledge, we are unable satisfactorily to explain; but this, he declares, is no reason why the believer should renounce his faith in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or deny its infallibility, especially since the whole of these apparent discrepancies taken together bear no proportion to the Scriptures as a whole. Here come in the words regarding the grain of sandstone, on which the Committee, without the shadow of a warrant, rely so much, and of which Dr. Adam has just spoken so confidently and defiantly. "The errors in matters of fact"—that is, as previously indicated, "those relating to numbers or dates"—"which sceptics search out bear no proportion to the whole. No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in its structure. Not less unreasonable is it to deny the inspiration of such a book as the Bible, because one sacred writer says that on a given occasion twenty-four, and another says that twenty-three, thousand men were slain." It is still, you will observe, of the apparent discrepancies that Dr. Hodge is speaking, his argument being that, even taking the whole of the apparent discrepancies or errors that sceptics are able to scrape together, they bear no greater proportion in point of magnitude to the contents of the Bible than a speck or two of sandstone, if found in the marble of the Parthenon, would bear to the whole of that huge structure. And just as no one would think for a moment of denying that the Parthenon is built of marble, even should he detect such a grain of sandstone in its structure, so no one ought for a moment to think of denying the plenary inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, on the ground of any or all of the apparent discrepancies or contradictions that sceptics may be able to point out. Objections

founded on the presence of such apparent errors, the Christian need not hesitate to tread under his feet, especially as, if we had all the light and knowledge that God could give us upon the point, it would speedily be found that, just as such a speck of sandstone as that referred to, even if found in the Parthenon, did not originally form a part of the marble, but was subsequently introduced into it by some convulsion of nature, so either the alleged errors or discrepancies of the Bible were not real, but simply apparent, or had been introduced into the text by transcribers, and formed no part of the original documents.

That this, and not Dr. Adam's "indubitable (!) inference," is the real meaning of Dr. Hodge, and the only object he had in view in making use of this illustration, and that nothing could have been more foreign to his thoughts or intentions in using it than the idea of inculcating that there are real errors, mistakes, and inaccuracies in the Bible, is evident, not only from the passages already quoted, but from the words which immediately follow the quotations given in the report. They are the following:—"Admitting that the Scriptures do contain, in a few instances, discrepancies which with our present means of knowledge we are unable satisfactorily to explain, they furnish no rational ground for denying their infallibility."

Should any further demonstration of the unwarrantableness of the use which the Committee have made in their report of Dr. C. Hodge's name and writings be required, it will be found in the following letter which I had the honour and privilege of receiving from that venerable gentleman on Saturday last, and which, with the Presbytery's permission, I shall now read.

PRINCETON, 2nd Nov., 1877.

MY DEAR SIR,—It would be very presumptuous in me to take part in any theological discussion going on in your venerable Presbytery. You condescend, however, to ask me what views I intended to present on the doctrine of Inspiration in my work on Systematic Theology. I think I may without impropriety answer that question without assuming that any great importance attached to any views of mine.

In order to avoid, as much as possible, even the appearance of taking part in a controversy with which I have no right to interfere, I write this letter before reading any of the documents you were good enough to send me.

All I purpose to do, is to state as briefly and as plainly as I can what I intended to teach in my Systematic Theology.

1. I recognise the obvious distinction between Revelation and Inspiration. The former is the communication of truth to the mind. The latter renders its subject trustworthy, *i.e.*, infallible in communicating truth, orally or by writing, to others.

2. The *modus operandi* of the Spirit is inscrutable, as it is in regeneration, and the gift of miraculous powers. All we know about it is from its effects. These are to be learned from didactic statements of the Scriptures, and from their phenomena. From the former we learn—

First, That inspiration rendered its subject the spokesman of God—that is, a prophet. An inspired man stood in the same relation to God, that Aaron stood to Moses in his intercourse with Pharaoh. What Aaron said to Pharaoh Moses said through him. What the prophet said, God said. “I will put my words into your mouth.” “Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Therefore what David said the Holy Ghost said. What Jeremiah said the Holy Ghost said. Our Lord said to his apostles, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of my Father that speaketh in you.” It is recorded that the apostles “spake as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Second, This divine authority, or infallibility, attaches to everything which inspired men taught, that is, to everything which they asserted to be true, whether fact, doctrine, or moral principle.

Third, It extends to the words. The thought is in the words. If the words be incorrectly chosen, the mind of the Spirit is incorrectly communicated, or not communicated at all. This seems to be explicitly asserted in the Scriptures. Holy men spake as they were moved—they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance—it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of my Father that speaketh in you. The apostle says, “We speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” The sacred writers quote, and argue from the words, sometimes from a single word, of Scripture as the Word of God.

Fourth, It follows from what has been said that the record is inspired, or infallible. This the apostle asserts (2 Tim. iii. 16), “All Scripture (or every Scripture—every part of the sacred writings) is given by inspiration of God.” The Scriptures—what is written—cannot be broken. Such is the declaration of Christ. It is the written word to which our Lord and the apostles constantly refer as of divine authority. The ultimate appeal as to all matters of fact, truth, or duty, was to the written word.

From the phenomena of Scripture we learn—

First, That the sacred writers were not mere machines. Inspiration did not destroy their intelligent consciousness or self-control.

Second, It did not interfere with their characteristic peculiarities of thought, speech, or style, any more than it did with their handwriting. Paul seems to intimate that his handwriting was rather peculiar. The Spirit so controlled the sacred penmen in the use of their gifts and faculties, that they should say just what He would have them say.

According to this doctrine of inspiration, there can be no errors in the teachings of the Bible. One part cannot contradict any other part, nor can what the Bible declares to be true as to fact or doctrine be inconsistent with any other fact or doctrine known to be true from other sources. That there are great difficulties in the way of this doctrine, is a matter of course. The same is true in regard to the doctrines of revelation—the Trinity, the person of Christ, the work of the Spirit. It is no less true of the doctrines of natural religion, and, in short, of every department of knowledge. Who can form any theory of the union of the soul

and body, which is not beset with difficulties which he cannot solve?

It is to be remembered that it is of the Bible as it came from the hands of the sacred writers—*i.e.*, of the true text, and of the Bible as properly interpreted—that this infallibility is asserted. There may be discrepancies between one part of the Scripture and other parts, arising from errors of transcribers. Far more numerous and important difficulties have their origin in erroneous interpretations. Everybody knows that the Bible was for ages understood to teach that the sun moves round the earth. Does any man now so understand it? Increase of knowledge will shed increasing light on the Bible; not correcting it, but bringing out more clearly its true meaning. Should we find in the Bible here and there phenomena which we cannot reconcile with what the Bible teaches of itself, that cannot be a rational ground for rejecting those teachings. It is so in nature. There are organs and rudiments of organs in animals, the use of which no physiologist can explain. No theist allows that fact to shake his faith in the doctrine of design. We do and must believe that God fashions our body, although He allows malformations sometimes to occur. So it is with the Bible. It is and remains the Word of God, although there may be things in it which we cannot explain.

I cannot rid myself of the impression that there is something absurd in my writing you such an A B C letter as this, merely to prove that an old man in America believes the common Church doctrine of inspiration. The accepted formula to express the doctrine of the Church in all ages, on this subject, is, that the Scriptures were written *Dictante Spiritu Dei*, so that whatever the Bible teaches God teaches. If this be true, our feet are on a rock. If it be not true, we are standing on quicksand.

The dear old Church of Scotland is the brightest star of the Reformation. May its lustre never be dimmed, until it is lost in the glory of the second coming of the Lord!

Your fellow-labourer in the Gospel,

(Signed) CHARLES HODGE.

P.S.—If there be anything in this paper inconsistent with what is written in my book, it is because I failed to make myself understood. What I have here written I was taught in my boyhood, and have always intended to teach.

(Signed) C. H.

How diametrically opposite all this is to the teaching of the sermon and preface before us, in which the apparent discrepancies and inaccuracies of the Bible are declared to be real errors—errors which existed from the very first, and which no amount of additional light or knowledge could show to be anything else than downright mistakes—mistakes which, in the author's judgment, are utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture, which he accordingly emphatically denies. And yet the Committee have the courage to tell us that the author of this sermon contends for nothing more than is covered by the quotations they give us from Dr. C. Hodge!

After what we have thus seen in reference to Dr. Hodge, it is scarcely necessary that I should detain the Presbytery by any lengthened exposure of the equally inapplicable and misleading character of the quotation given us in the report from Thomas Scott. As pointed out by several of the dissentients from the report, not only do the words quoted from Scott not give the slightest countenance to the idea either that there are, or that he held that there were, errors and mistakes in the Bible such as are spoken of in this sermon, but they are directly at variance with all such teaching, as every candid and unprejudiced reader of the extracts quoted in the report will at once perceive. So far from holding and advocating that there are real errors and mistakes in the Bible, and on the ground of them denying the Bible's infallibility, Scott himself tells us, in the introduction to his Commentary on the Bible, where his article on inspiration originally appeared, that his object in writing it was to counteract the mischief which was at the time being done to the truth by many learned and eminent men, who, in standing forth as the champions of the Bible, appeared to him to have betrayed the cause, by giving up its plenary inspiration and admitting that certain portions of it were entirely of human production, and so might be more or less incorrect and erroneous. "It "would," he declares, "be waste of time to attempt to prove "either the authenticity or genuineness of the sacred writings, "unless in entire subserviency to the demonstration that they "are divinely inspired. All the works and words of mere men "are fallible, and may be erroneous ; and the desideratum (that "which is especially wanted) is an infallible standard, to which "all other books and instructions of every kind may be referred, "with which they may be compared, by which they may be "judged. Now, if the sacred writings are indeed 'the Word of "'God,' if 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,' we have "this desideratum, and have nothing further in this respect to "expect or desire" "Every sentence," he further declares, "must be considered as the sure testimony of God, in "that sense in which it is proposed as truth. Facts occurred, "and words were spoken, as to the import of them, and the "instruction contained in them, exactly as they stand here "recorded. . . . On this ground, all difference or disparity "between one and another of the sacred writers is wholly "excluded. Moses, Jeremiah, David, and Isaiah ; Paul, Peter, "James, and John are all supposed to speak, or write, 'as they "'were moved by the Holy Ghost.' They are the voice, but the "Divine Spirit is everywhere the speaker. They write indeed "in such language as their different talents, education, habits, "and associations suggested or rendered natural to them ; but "the Holy Spirit so entirely superintended them, when writing, "as to exclude every improper expression, and to guide them to "all those which best suited their several subjects: 'which things "'we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but

“‘which the Holy Ghost teacheth.’ Many particulars which ‘philosophers, or orators, or critics think inaccurate may consist ‘with this complete inspiration; but every kind and degree of ‘misrepresentation, as springing from popular or national prejudices or opinions, or as calculated to mislead the humble ‘believer or to sanction error, must be totally excluded.”

This is what Scott declares, and yet this is the man who, according to the Committee, held and advocated that there are inaccuracies, errors, and imperfections in the Bible, such as are sufficient to explode the averment of its infallibility! Whatever the Committee may still think, I am persuaded that the impression of most of the other members of Presbytery will be, not only that the Committee have, doubtless unintentionally, done a grievous wrong to these two authors, but that two more thorough-going opponents of the views promulgated and advocated in this sermon, or two abler or more decided advocates of the plenary inspiration and absolute infallibility of the Holy Scriptures could not easily be found.

The Convener of the Committee, however, has not contented himself with “running the risk of damaging the fair name” of Dr. C. Hodge and Thomas Scott; but has done so also in the case of Matthew Henry, Richard Baxter, and John Howe, although with just as little warrant, and quite as little success. No one acquainted with the writings of these men could have listened to the use made of them, without being amazed that such names, or such quotations should ever have been adduced for such a purpose. Neither the quotation from Baxter, nor that from Howe has the slightest bearing upon the question in dispute. Both of these writers, in the passages adduced, are speaking, not of the facts or truths of Scripture, but of the styles and language in which these have been recorded by the several writers—their object being to show that, as admitted by all intelligently acquainted with the subject, the diversities, or even what some may think defects, and Dr. Bannerman calls “sinless deficiencies”* of style and

* I was amazed at the use made by Dr. Bruce, at the adjourned debate, of the expression “sinless deficiencies” employed by Dr. Bannerman. After quoting passages from Richard Baxter’s preface to his Paraphrases on the New Testament, in which that writer speaks of the error of holding with regard to the Scriptures “that there is no human imperfection of the penman found in phrase, word, or method”; he went on to say, —I quote from the *Daily Mail*,—“It appears, then, that there is good ‘authority for thinking that it may serve a good purpose to speak frankly on ‘suitable occasions concerning the ‘sinless deficiencies of Scripture,’ to use a ‘phrase of Dr. Bannerman. Of course all this is on the supposition that a ‘minister in our Church is at liberty to hold and express such opinions as those ‘of Osterzee or Baxter. I believe that there is such liberty. I hold that a man ‘is at liberty to say not only that there may be, but that there are such things ‘in Scripture as Dr. Dods alleges.”

In these words, Dr. Bruce, it will be observed, speaks, I trust unintentionally, of the things, *i.e.*, the errors or inaccuracies which Dr. Dods alleges are to be found in Scripture, as if they were of the same description, and belonged to the same category, as the “sinless deficiencies” spoken of by Dr. Bannerman.

language, arising from diversities of education, constitution, temper and genius, constitute no argument against the perfection and infallibility of the Scriptures, but, on the contrary, are to be

man, and the "imperfection in phrase, word, or method" spoken of by Baxter; whereas he cannot but know that they are radically different. Had "the inaccuracies, errors, or imperfections," of which Dr. Dods speaks, been simply "sinless deficiencies," that is, as Dr. Bannerman explains it, defects or imperfections "of a literary kind," "to be traced in peculiarities in grammar, and idiom and style"—"sins against a pure dialect, or a right syntax, or an Attic taste," no one that I know of would ever have thought of calling in question his liberty to speak as "frankly" of their existence as he chose. This, however, is very far from being their character. He himself expressly affirms that they are such as occur in ordinary writings through "imperfect information or lapse of memory," and are "sufficient entirely to explode the averment of infallibility"—inaccuracies, the existence of which make it "impossible to affirm that all the statements contained in Scripture are strictly accurate—impossible, that is, to claim for Scripture an absolute infallibility." How, in these circumstances, Dr. Bruce should speak of these as amounting to nothing more than those of which Bannerman and Baxter speak is to me inexplicable.

I agree, of course, with Dr. Bruce in thinking that it may serve a good purpose to speak frankly on suitable occasions concerning the "sinless deficiencies" of Scripture alluded to, the existence of which cannot be denied, and never, so far as I am aware, ever has been denied by any intelligent defender of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures; but it can never serve anything but a most mischievous purpose to hold and maintain that such errors and inaccuracies as those, of which Dr. Dods speaks, are to be found in the Bible—errors and inaccuracies for the existence of which neither he nor Dr. Bruce adduces a particle of evidence, and in reference to which even Canon Farrar, as quoted by the Committee in their report, declares that "neither the widest learning nor the acutest ingenuity of scepticism ever pointed to one complete and demonstrable error of fact or doctrine in the Old or New Testament."

At a subsequent portion of his speech, Dr. Bruce, in alluding again to the expression "sinless deficiencies" employed by Dr. Bannerman, thus expresses himself: "It is a suggestive phrase, and raises the question,—May there not be sinless deficiencies of another kind which even he was not prepared to admit? May there not be sinless and harmless ignorance in the Bible writers, as well as sinless faults against grammar and pure style? You cannot settle that question *a priori*. It is a question of fact." Be it so; but surely it is a new way of determining questions of fact, by adducing such arguments as these,—“May there not be,” &c., “May there not be,” &c. If such “may be’s” are to be regarded as facts, it will be an easy matter to prove the existence in the Bible of any kind of errors you please. If it be a question of fact, and if the facts, as Dr. Bruce’s statement implies, are such as answer the question in the affirmative, it would surely be somewhat more to the purpose to adduce them than gratuitously to allege and affirm their hidden existence.

Alluding to Dr. Martin, Dr. Bruce thus writes: “A writer already referred to says that God, in gracious condescension, owns as His book our present Bible, though not free from defects. Very good and very true. But why not carry the idea of gracious condescension further back, and say that God might, in gracious condescension, own as His book the original Scriptures, though not free of defects? I believe this is the simple truth, the contrary position is a pure assumption without warrant, and not without practical danger.” I had understood that Dr. Bruce, although he maintains that the ministers of the Church are at perfect liberty to hold and avow that there are inaccuracies in Scripture such as those which Dr. Dods alleges, a sufficiently advanced position for any one to occupy, did not personally either hold or avow the actual existence of any such inaccuracies. I regret exceedingly to find that I have been mistaken, and that, if Dr. Bruce

regarded as a proof of the supernatural inspiration of their writers. Had these honoured names been adduced as opposing what is called the "mechanical" theory of inspiration, the quotations would have been more or less to the point, although, in so adducing them, Dr. Adam would have been combating a mere man of straw, as no one that I know of in the Presbytery, or I may say elsewhere, now holds any such absurd theory. But that he should have adduced them in support of the allegation of the author of this sermon, that there are errors and mistakes in the Bible, is simply inexplicable. So far from any of these authors holding any such mischievous doctrine, they hold and teach the very reverse. "That all Scripture," says Matthew Henry, in the preface to his commentary, "is given by inspiration of God, and that holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we are sure; but who dare pretend to describe that inspiration? . . . But we may be sure that the blessed Spirit did not only habitually prepare and qualify the penmen of Scripture for that service, and put it into their hearts to write, but did likewise assist their understandings and memories in recording those things which they themselves had the knowledge of, and effectually secure them from error and mistake . . . And, no doubt, as far as was necessary for the end designed, they were directed by the Spirit, even in the language and expression."

"My reasons," says Richard Baxter, in vol. II., p. 217, of *Virtue's* edition (London, 1838), "why I take every history, chronology, genealogy in Scripture as certainly true, and every other word spoken by a true prophet and apostle as by the Spirit, and not disowned by the Scripture itself, but such as you accuse in the gospel, are these: First, . . . This writing is part of the preaching which Christ sent them for, and no doubt but the Spirit did cause them to write all the substantial part; and therefore we have reason to think that the smallest parts are from the same author, and that He assisted them in the least as well as in the greatest. . . . Even their plain and less accurate style and method may be best, as fittest to its use and end. Secondly, There is no caviller that yet hath proved any falsehood or contradiction in any passages of the Scripture. Thirdly, The church which received the Scriptures as God's Word did receive the whole as His word, and as certainly true in every part." "He" (p. 219) "that first proveth the truth of the Christian faith by solid evidence, may and ought to be certain of

does justice to his own views in the extract just quoted, he expressly declares that he believes it to be the simple truth that God owns as His book the Original Scriptures, "though not free of defects"; and not only so but declares the "contrary position a pure assumption without warrant"; and that too without giving us anything else in proof of what he declares, or as a warrant for his belief, than simply that "might not God" do as he alleges? May I not, in these circumstances, retort his words upon himself, and say, "It is a pure assumption without warrant."

But Dr. Bruce declares that the contrary position, although without warrant, is "not without practical danger." The danger, however, as I take it, is all the other way. Nor am I singular in this—Drs. Bannerman, Fairbairn, Cunningham and Candlish take the very same view of the matter. I regret exceedingly to find Dr. Bruce differing so decidedly from them. The practical danger of his doing so will, I cannot but fear, speedily be found to be disastrously great—unspeakably greater than he seems to be able at present to anticipate. May my fears be disappointed!

the truth, though he be not able to solve all seeming contradictions in the Scriptures, or answer all objections which occur; yea, certain of every particle thereof."

After what has thus been stated, am I not warranted in saying that "no ingenuity will be here of the very slightest avail" in obtaining support for the allegation that there are errors and mistakes in the Holy Scriptures; and not only so, but that those who are bent upon apologizing for that allegation should confine themselves to Riccalton, Auberlen, Osterzee, Alford, Farrar, and Row, *et hoc genus omne*, lest, instead of damaging the fair names of others, they run the risk of damaging only their own.

I might now have adverted to the extraordinary use which has been made by the Committee in paragraph 4, section 4, of their report (see Appendix) of the name of good Halyburton, in vindication of that curious illustration of the way in which sceptics form their canon of Scripture, to be found on p. 25 of the sermon. I do not, however, intend to take up the time of the Presbytery with any lengthened remarks upon any portion of that specially apologetic department of the report, but shall leave it to be dealt with by others.

I would simply ask the Presbytery to mark the way in which the Committee apologize in paragraph (2) for that most unwarrantable statement quoted from p. 10 of the sermon—"inspiration does not preclude the necessity of acquiring information by the ordinary means." Not to dwell upon the way in which the word inspiration is here improperly used in connection with the acquiring of information, I would ask how, if what is stated in this sentence be true, information or knowledge, not acquirable by ordinary means, is to be obtained. It was proved on a former occasion, in direct opposition to what the author says at the foot of p. 19 and top of p. 20, of his sermon, that the historical writers of Scripture, times without number, record facts of which they could not possibly have a knowledge "by the ordinary means." How or whence, then, did they obtain their knowledge of these facts, if "inspiration" or rather supernatural revelation, "does not, even in such cases, preclude (or supersede) the necessity of acquiring information by the ordinary means"? The Committee's remark, that God "honours the natural and makes use of it up to the utmost limits of its proper sphere," is nothing to the point, seeing the author, in his sermon, acknowledges no limits to its sphere, but affirms that it stands in no need of any such limitation: "They never ask us," he says, "to take their word for a thing which they had not good means of knowing in the ordinary way; they do not come before us as men who, by a process called inspiration (revelation?) were made aware of facts which had not come within their own observation or knowledge." Notwithstanding all this, the Committee tell us that "nothing is more certain than that the author of the discourse believes and teaches that the Scriptures are full of truths

“which no unaided powers of men could ever have discovered, or “recorded as they stand in the Bible.” Where they obtain this information they do not tell us. It would puzzle them to find it in the sermon, in so far, at least, as it bears upon the historical portions of the Bible. In so far as the grounds for the statement are not in the sermon, it is entirely beside the point.

In paragraph (3) the Committee tell us that they have the author's “express assurance that he does not stand by” the statement therein quoted. On turning to his letter, however, I find that all he says is, that it is “much too broad and sweeping.” Even had it been fully and unreservedly withdrawn, its withdrawal would not have altered the character of the teaching in the sermon in the very slightest. So much is this the case that on my objecting to it at a private conference of a few members of Presbytery in the month of May, it was defended by the Convener and several members of the Committee who are now so thankful for its modification.

As regards the statement quoted in paragraph (4) of this 4th section of the report, in which the author, in vindication of his statement in the sermon (p. 25) that “he cares not whether a person says the epistles of Paul are inspired or not, so long as he accepts their teaching,” gives us his rationale of the process by which sceptics form their canon of Scripture, the Committee say that it seems intended to be but a strong way of expressing the distinctive Protestant view of the self-evidencing power of Scripture. They evidently had not been able to make up their minds as to what the meaning or design of the statement may be, and so were not in a position to condemn or defend it. Accordingly, it will be observed that they wisely abstain from adducing what Halyburton says, as a corroboration of what the author says, which was the only point that required confirmation, and the only relevant use that could be made of Halyburton's testimony, but proceed at great length to adduce his testimony to what did not need any confirmation, as no one was calling it in question, viz., the self-evidencing power of Scripture. Not only so, but the Convener directed a great part of his speech to the establishment of this point as one, in his estimation, “of very great importance,” availing himself at great length of the help of Dr. Owen. What relevant bearing any thing quoted either from Halyburton or from Owen had upon the question at issue it would be difficult to perceive, especially, as Dr. Adam declared that the question was not whether the Committee's interpretation of Dr. Dods' statement was right or wrong, “nor any thing like it.”

In the last paragraph of the report we have the conclusion to which the Committee's examination of the Sermon has led them, as to what is the duty of the Presbytery in regard to it. That conclusion is that we should do nothing, and they recommend accordingly. This is a conclusion which, looking at it even in the light of the report, I cannot but regard as a very “lame and impotent” one. Looking at it in the light of the sermon and

preface, it is one which I trust this Presbytery will pause before they adopt. I for one at least could not homologate it, or act according to it, without feeling that I had betrayed my trust, and been unfaithful to my divine Master, and to the interests of His truth and cause. Hence the proposal in my motion that the Presbytery should decline to approve of this report, or to adopt the recommendation with which it concludes.

It is not alone, however, or even chiefly with the report that as a Presbytery we have to do. We must deal with the doctrines propounded in the sermon and preface reported on. These doctrines we have seen are contrary to, or inconsistent with, the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the teaching of this Church. This being so, they are deserving of the most decided disapproval of the Presbytery. Accordingly it is further proposed that we strongly condemn them on the grounds stated in the preamble of this motion, and not merely "in the line of the strictures of the report," as proposed in the motion of my respected friend, Dr. Bonar, which would really be no condemnation at all, so far as the essential nature of the views in question is concerned. Anything short of what is proposed in my motion I cannot but regard as trifling with an important and imperative duty.

But if the doctrines, considered in themselves, deserve to be strongly condemned, then it is clear that we cannot but regard the publication of them, especially when continued so long, as deserving of censure too. Not only so, but it is our imperative duty to do what in us lies to put a stop to the further propagation of them. Accordingly, what I further propose is that the Presbytery enjoin the author of them to withdraw from publication the sermon and preface in which they are promulgated, and appoint a Committee to confer with him and report.

And now I am done. A most painful and unpleasant duty I have had to discharge. Could I with a good conscience have shirked it, most gladly and thankfully should I have done so. I have no love for such work, neither have I any personal ends to serve. Earnestly have I sought to have no other object in view than the glory of God, the honour and integrity of His Word, and the good of all concerned.*

* After consultation it was agreed on the morning of the 29th, previous to the adjourned discussion, that Dr. Bonar and I should withdraw our motions, and that the following should be proposed by Mr. Howie :—"The Presbytery thank the Committee and the convener for their diligence, and regret that they cannot approve of the report or adopt the recommendation with which it concludes ; disapprove of and censure the views set forth in the sermon and preface regarding inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible as contrary to the Word of God and the standards and teaching of this Church ; instruct the author not to carry the publication any further, and appoint a Committee to confer with him in regard to the views in question, and report."

This motion, on being put as an amendment to Dr. Adam's was lost—51 (29 ministers and 22 elders) voting for it, and 54 (38 ministers and 16 elders) voting for Dr. Adam's.

On this a Dissent and Complaint to the Synod in April was forthwith taken

on the part of the minority. Reasons for this Dissent and Complaint, signed by 47 of the minority, viz., 29 ministers, including the moderator who had not a vote—all in short but one, and 18 elders, were lodged with the clerk in due time, and are in the following terms :—

WE, the undersigned, dissent from the judgment of the Presbytery on 29th November, in the case of the Rev. Dr. Dods, and complain against it to the ensuing meeting of the Free Synod of Glasgow and Ayr for the following reasons, and for others to be urged at the bar of the Synod :—

1. Firstly, because, in the report approved of, the committee by whom it was submitted do not bring before the Presbytery a full and faithful representation of the unscriptural and dangerous character of the views set forth in the sermon and preface reported on, especially of those which bear upon the inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scriptures, but on the contrary apologize for them; and not only so, but even vindicate the author in holding and publishing that there were errors and inaccuracies in the Scriptures as originally given, by declaring that the very same view has been held and advocated by theologians of the highest authority, and of world-wide reputation for orthodoxy not less than for ability and learning.”

2. Secondly, because the Presbytery while finding that the said sermon and preface are open to grave objection, do so merely “in the respects and on the grounds specified in the report;” that is, not on the ground of the matter or doctrinal teaching contained in them, but solely on the ground of the manner or form in which that teaching is expressed; whereas, they ought to have condemned and censured the said sermon and preface as containing views on the inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures and other matters, contrary to or inconsistent with the Word of God and the standards and teaching of this Church.

3. Thirdly, because the Presbytery have merely represented to the author the desirableness of not continuing the publication of the sermon and preface in the present form; whereas, considering the unscriptural and dangerous character of their teaching, he ought to have been instructed not to carry the publication of them any farther, and the case disposed of otherwise according to the laws of the Church.

4. Fourthly, because the decision of the Presbytery will, if unreversed, authoritatively declare that any minister of this Church may, without challenge, not only hold, but also preach and publish such views as are promulgated in this sermon.

Robert Bremner, Andrew A. Bonar, Alex. Urquhart, Evan Gordon, Robert Gault, Hugh M'Dougall, R. C. Smith, Robert Howie, James Nicoll, G. L. Campbell, Henry Anderson, J. D. M'Meikan, William Jeffrey, John F. M'Gregor, A. C. Fullarton, Hugh M'Intosh, William Tullo, John Stewart, George Campbell, John Riddell, Alexander Andrew, R. M. Thornton, James Fordyce, James Stewart, Alexander Murchison, J. Smith, James Drysdale, G. W. Cumming, William Scott, ministers; Robert Marshall, Donald Macpherson, Robert M'Callum, James Allan, H. M'Kinnon, Malcolm M'Gregor, James Donald, George Munro, James Robertson, William C. Morton, William Morton, John Buchanan, Allan Munro, Thomas Macklin, Thomas Laurie, Duncan M'Callum, John Wands, William Beith, elders.

APPENDIX.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON DR. DODS' SERMON.

THE motion in connection with which the Committee were appointed was in these terms:—"The Presbytery, having special respect to the difficulties felt and expressed by brethren regarding the views of Dr. Dods on the subject of Revelation and Inspiration, as stated by him in a sermon lately published, entitled *Revelation and Inspiration*, resolve to appoint a Committee to consider deliberately whether the Presbytery is called to take any action with reference to said views, and if so, of what nature, and to report to a subsequent meeting of Presbytery." The Committee have given their most careful attention to the subject remitted to them, they have done so under a deep sense of responsibility, and they now beg to report as follows:—

1. The distinction which Dr. Dods makes between revelation and inspiration is a real one; it is also an important one in certain respects, especially is it so for apologetic purposes, and it is for these purposes that it is brought forward and insisted on in the sermon. It is of no small consequence to show that divine revelation, and with it the Christian faith, can be maintained, so far as the real substance of them is concerned, apart from any special theory of inspiration; that even if adversaries could successfully impugn the doctrine of inspiration altogether, they would not thereby subvert the great historical verities of sacred Scripture. This ground is often taken up in works on apologetics; and that the sermon belongs to this class of writings, and is to be judged of accordingly, may be inferred from its structure, and at all events is rendered certain by the express statement of the author in the preface. But it is manifest that such a line of argument, however legitimate and useful, exposes him who follows it to a certain temptation and danger. He will be apt to place revelation in the front, and to throw inspiration for the time into the background; and, unless he exercises the greatest care, he will at least appear to magnify the one and depreciate the other. The Committee are of opinion that Dr. Dods has not sufficiently guarded against this tendency, and that he does use language which, however unintentionally, yet really, seems to cast doubt on the necessity and the importance of divine inspiration. The proof of the statement now made lies rather in the general strain of the sermon than in particular passages, but they may point, in confirmation of it, to two such passages: "All that we need to contend for is the historic credibility of the narratives. This we can establish in the completest way; anything beyond this is not indispensable" (Preface, p. 4). "I, for my part, do not

care what meaning a man attaches to the word 'inspired,' nor, indeed, whether he says these epistles are inspired or not, so long as he accepts their teaching" (Sermon, p. 25). *

2. As regards inspiration, the Committee have no doubt that Dr. Dods holds most sincerely and strongly that the sacred Scriptures were divinely and supernaturally inspired. Whatever may be thought of the clearness or obscurity of Dr. Dods' teaching as to this in the sermon, in a written communication which was laid before the Committee he gives his testimony on the point in terms the most direct and unequivocal. There is, and can be, therefore, no room for difference of opinion as to his orthodoxy in this respect, which is the fundamental matter here involved. It was natural for him, considering the course and design of his argument, to bring forward and insist much on the human element or agency in the production of Sacred Scripture. That factor, though subordinate, is not less real than the divine, as every intelligent reader of the Bible must be aware. The Committee, however, are clearly of opinion that in setting forth this aspect of the truth Dr. Dods has indulged in speculation, to an unwarrantable and perilous extent, regarding the nature and mode of inspiration, thus presenting a striking contrast to the Church's Standards, which assert the great fact without laying down any theory on the subject. They also think that he has instituted comparisons and made representations which have a tendency to limit the sphere and lower the idea of inspiration, as when he says, "The inspiration of the apostles fitting them to preserve to the world the life and character of our Lord, was not an influence which served them instead of eyes and memory, but it was an influence which set them in the right attitude towards Him they were to reflect, and which made them sensitive to everything in Him which was of the highest value" (p. 20). Again, "Inspiration, in short, is a spiritual gift, and only indirectly a mental one. It illuminates the mind as enthusiasm does, by stimulating and elevating it; it enriches the memory as love does, by intensifying the interest in a certain object, and by making the mind sensitive to its impressions and retentive of them. It brings light to the understanding, and wisdom to the spirit, as purity of intention does, or as a high aim in life does. But it is not a gift conferring intellectual acuteness where that did not previously exist, nor imparting any superhuman power of knowledge." (pp. 21, 22).† And finally on this point, they are deeply persuaded that he has given rise to much anxiety regarding his views, by not connecting his vindication of the part which the sacred writers had in the production of Scripture with sufficiently explicit and prominent balancing statements as to the divine authorship, which underlies and shines through all the human authorship of the Bible.

3. The chief difficulty connected with the sermon, it is believed, lies in the fact that Dr. Dods holds a theory of inspiration which consists with the existence of certain inaccuracies or errors in

* All quotations are made from the third edition of the Sermon.

† With reference to this statement, see Correspondence, p. 52.

sacred Scripture. He makes statements like the following: "No careful student of Scripture can well deny that there are in accuracies in the gospels and elsewhere—inaccuracies such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory" (page 9). "It is impossible to affirm that all the statements contained in Scripture are strictly accurate—impossible, that is, to claim for Scripture an absolute infallibility" (page 10). "It has been considered infallible not only in regard to the revelation it contains, but in regard to the whole form in which that revelation is conveyed to us, and so when errors and imperfections have been pointed out, those whose faith has rested on its verbal and universal infallibility have received a violent shock as if revelation itself were being brought into danger" (pages 17, 18). "I will not deny that he (Paul) was occasionally wrong in a date, but is not the criticism which founds anything on that ludicrously superficial" (page 24). Dr. Dods not only admits but maintains that these alleged defects are of a trifling nature, that they are of no real importance whatever, and that they have no bearing on doctrine or duty, on faith or life. He holds that the Bible was not intended to teach men history or science, to give them any authoritative information on those matters in connection with which the inaccuracies he contends for occur.

Here the Committee are constrained to express the conviction that the whole mode of representation adopted on this part of the subject is seriously objectionable. It appears to them that Dr. Dods gives an unhappy prominence to these alleged inaccuracies, that he dwells on them in a way which, while far from intended, is fitted to grate on the feelings of those who tremble at the Divine Word. They greatly prefer to regard many of the matters referred to as unsolved difficulties, and they cannot but here quote the words of one who agrees with Dr. Dods in refusing to accept a view of inspiration which excludes the possibility of mistake on the part of the sacred writers. Dr. Farrar says, "It has, indeed, been often and emphatically denied that this possibility of mistake could affect them (the apostles) in what they wrote. That they *did* so err I am not so irreverent as to assert, *nor has the wisest learning and acutest ingenuity of scepticism ever pointed to one complete and demonstrable error of fact or doctrine in the Old or New Testament.*" * But while they cannot approve of the language employed in the sermon, as little can they deny that the view maintained is one which has been held and advocated by theologians of the highest authority, of world-wide reputation for orthodoxy, not less than for ability and learning. They have the assurance of Dr. Dods that he really contends for nothing more than is covered by the following quotations from the works of Dr. C. Hodge and Thomas Scott, the well known commentator; and that indeed, with reference to the importance of these inaccuracies, he would be contented to express his meaning in terms rather falling within than going beyond those which one of them employs. Dr. Hodge thus writes—(1) "These apparent discrepancies, although numerous, are for the most part trivial, relating, in most cases, to

* *Bible Educator*, vol. I, p. 207.

numbers or dates. (2) The great majority of them are only apparent, and yield to careful examination. (3) Many of them may fairly be ascribed to errors of transcribers. (4) The marvel and the miracle is that there are so few of them of any real importance."

. . . "The errors in matters of fact which sceptics search out bear no proportion to the whole. No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in its structure. Not less unreasonable is it to deny the inspiration of such a book as the Bible, because one sacred writer says that on a given occasion twenty-four, and another says that twenty-three thousand, men were slain. Surely a Christian may be allowed to tread such objections under his feet." * Thomas Scott, in his essay on Inspiration, thus states the matter, "By the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, I mean such an immediate and complete discovery by the Holy Spirit to the minds of the sacred penmen, of those things which could not have been otherwise known, and such an effectual superintendency as to those matters which they might be informed of by other means, as entirely to preserve them from all error, in every particular, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or commandments contained in their writings."

. . . "Nor does it at all invalidate the complete inspiration of the sacred writers, to allow that they expressed themselves in common language, and wrote of things as men generally spoke of them, rather than according to philosophical exactness, or in the style that was used in the schools of the learned, during the ages in which they lived. Supposed, or unimportant errors, or inaccuracies of expression in such things, are not in the least inconsistent with that entire divine inspiration of which we speak; for the Scriptures were not written to render us exact philosophers, or to instruct us in ancient history and geography, but to make us wise unto salvation. Nor do the few immaterial mistakes, which in a long course of years have crept in, through the errors of transcribers, create any difficulty or uncertainty to the humble and teachable inquirer, though they may give occasion to the self-sufficient to cavil and object; for 'the Lord taketh the wise in their own craftiness.'" †

4. There are various remarks and expressions in the sermon to which serious objection has been taken, and to some of these it may be proper to advert very briefly. Thus:—

(1.) In the opening sentences of the discourse these words occur: "We find in some of them" (that is, the sacred books of other religions than the Christian), "a moral teaching, little if at all inferior to that contained in our own." In the opinion of the Committee that statement is much stronger than the facts of the case warrant; but they recognise the intention as being not to disparage the Scriptures, for the statement is made to give emphasis to the contrast drawn between these Scriptures as presenting a clear, consecutive, and complete historical account of God's revelation of himself to men, and all other sacred books, which want this grand characteristic, whatever their excellencies in certain respects.

* *Theology*, vol. I. p. 169, 170.

† *Theol. Works*, p. 164.

(2.) At page 10 it is said that "inspiration does not preclude the necessity of acquiring information by the ordinary means," and the same idea is largely insisted on throughout the sermon. Dr. Dods is dealing with the historical books of Scripture, and it is an undoubted and remarkable feature of God's way of working, that even in the case of miracles he honours the natural, and makes use of it up to the utmost limits of its proper sphere. But nothing is more certain than that the author of the discourse believes and teaches, that the Scriptures are full of truths which no unaided powers of men could ever have discovered, or recorded as they stand in the Bible, where there is a height and depth, a length and breadth, which these powers could not have reached even when putting forth their greatest efforts and rising to their noblest exercise.

(3.) At page 22 it is said that "inspiration is not a gift imparting any superhuman power of knowledge." This language is difficult to reconcile with the idea of inspiration as a gift which raises him on whom it is bestowed above the merely natural or ordinary human sphere, and therefore the Committee are happy to have Dr. Dods' express assurance that he does not stand by it, and that it would have been corrected but for the difficulty of doing so under the circumstances which had arisen. The explanation is important, and the difficulty felt in connection with the words ought to be regarded as satisfactorily removed.

(4.) Much fault has been found with the statement in page 25 : "I do not believe what Paul says, because I first believe him to be inspired, but I believe him to be inspired, because he brings light to my spirit which can only have proceeded from God." But startling as the language at first is, it seems intended to be but a strong way of expressing the distinctively Protestant view of the self-evidencing power of Scripture. Any number of testimonies as to this self-evidencing power might be adduced, but one taken from the sainted Halyburton's *Reason of Faith* may suffice. "That whereon all, to whom the word of God comes, are bound to receive it with the faith above described, is not any particular word of the Scripture bearing testimony to all the rest. As for instance, it is not merely or primarily upon this account that I am bound to receive all the written word as the Word of God, because the Scripture says, 2 Tim. iii, 16, 'That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.'" "The formal reason or ground whereon I assent to, or receive the whole Scriptures, and every particular truth in them, and am obliged in duty so to do, is, the authority and truth of God speaking in them, and speaking every truth they contain, evidencing itself to my faith, when duly exercised about them and attending to them, by their own distinguishing light and power. Or when it is enquired, wherefore do ye believe, receive, assent to, and rest on the Scriptures as indeed the Word of God, and not of man? I answer, I do believe them, because they carry in them, to my faith, an evidence of God, or do evidence themselves by their own light and power to my faith duly exercised about them, that they are the Word of God, and not of man." (Prop. vii, x.) *

* Halyburton's *Works*, p. 531-2.

In conclusion, the Committee are satisfied that the sermon is open to grave objections, in the respects and on the grounds already specified, and they do not wonder at the anxiety which it has awakened. It is fragmentary and immature, and in it Dr. Dods, as they are persuaded, has not done justice either to his own remarkable gifts and influential position, or to the weighty and difficult subject which is here handled. In consideration of all this, and very specially of the serious doubts and misapprehensions as to his real meaning to which the sermon has given rise, he would probably do well not to carry the publication any farther, at least in its present form. But it is a relief to them, while saying all this, to be able to add, that in their judgment the Presbytery is not called to institute any process, or to take any further action in the matter; and they now beg to report accordingly.

CORRESPONDENCE.

I.

LETTER FROM DR. ADAM TO DR. DODS.

GLASGOW, *24th Sept.*, 1877.

MY DEAR DR. DODS,—It will be a favour to myself, and it may be helpful to the Committee, if you will kindly answer the following questions:—

1. Am I right in believing, as I do, that you hold, and do not mean by anything in your sermon to call in question, the divine supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

2. Do you regard the alleged inaccuracies which you speak of in your sermon as in any way affecting the Scriptures as a revelation of doctrine and duty—a divine authoritative rule of faith and life?

3. Does your view of these inaccuracies differ from that presented in the two quotations which I enclose, the one from the theological works of Thomas Scott, the other from those of Dr. C. Hodge?

Add to the answers anything which you wish to be specially in view of the Committee when considering the statements contained in your sermon and preface.—Believe me, yours very truly,

J. ADAM.

REV. DR. DODS.

NOTE—The two quotations referred to in the letter are those given in the foregoing Report, p. 48.

II.

LETTER IN REPLY FROM DR. DODS TO DR. ADAM.

13 BURNBANK GARDENS,
24th September, 1877.

MY DEAR SIR,—In reply to yours just received I have to say, 1st. You are right in believing that I hold, and do not mean by anything in my sermon to call in question, the divine supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures.

2nd. I hold that the inaccuracies alluded to in my sermon in no way affect the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures as an infallible revealed rule of faith and life.

3rd. The quotations from Scott and Hodge which you submit to me, pretty accurately express my view of the inaccuracies in Scripture. Only I object to Hodge's admission that there are some of "real importance." I am not aware of any which have any "real importance."

In connection with the first of your questions, I may add that I regret to find that I have given occasion for its being asked. On p. 22 of my sermon I have said that inspiration does not impart any superhuman power of knowledge. This expression is much too broad and sweeping, and I would have withdrawn it long since ; but this is one of the evils which ecclesiastical procedure entails, that no alteration can be made on a document to which the attention of the Church has been turned. All that I could do in the circumstances I did : I wrote a preface by which I desire that the sermon be interpreted.

Regretting the trouble I am giving to you and other friends,

I remain, yours very truly,

MARCUS DODS.

III.

DISSENTS BY MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE.

FREE PRESBYTERY HOUSE,
GLASGOW, November 5th, 1877.

We, the undersigned members of the Committee of Presbytery appointed to consider the sermon on "Revelation and Inspiration," recently published by the Rev. Dr. Dods, hereby intimate our dissent from the report adopted by that Committee, in so far as regards the following particulars:—

First. We dissent from, and disapprove of, the apologetic tone apparent in several parts of the report, and especially the apologetic way in which the report meets the charges that Dr. Dods brings against the Scriptures as originally given, of containing "inaccuracies such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory," of containing "errors and imperfections," &c. At the top of page 5th of the report it is

stated that while the Committee "cannot approve of the language employed in the sermon, as little can they deny that the view maintained is one which has been held and advocated by theologians of the highest authority, of world-wide reputation for orthodoxy, not less than for ability and learning." The only authors referred to in support of this statement are Dr. Charles Hodge and Mr. Thomas Scott, the commentator, and the quotations from them are not relevant, for they do not admit that any errors were in the Scriptures *as originally given*; on the contrary, as shown by the context, and other portions of their writings, they hold the Divine authorship of Scripture, and their infallible truth, as originally given. The clause in the quotation from Mr. Scott, in which he speaks of "supposed, or unimportant errors, or inaccuracies of expression in *such things*," as shown by the preceding sentence, applies only to such things as arise from the use of common language, rather than the language of philosophical exactness. It is not correct, therefore, to say that these "theologians of the highest authority, and of world-wide reputation for orthodoxy," agree with Dr. Dods, for they do not.

Second. We dissent from, and disapprove of, the last sentence but one of the report as being far too weak and altogether inadequate to meet the requirements of the case. Dr. Dods has given a theory of inspiration in which he has ignored the Divine authorship of Scripture; in which he has denied the infallible truth and Divine authority thereof, at least in so far as regards the "verbal expression" in which God's revelation is communicated,* and in which he has brought against the Scriptures as originally given charges of containing "inaccuracies," "errors and imperfections," and "imperfect information." The Committee's report admits that Dr. Dods "has indulged in speculation to an *unwarrantable and perilous extent*;" that they "are constrained to express the conviction that the whole mode of representation adopted on this part of the subject is *seriously objectionable*;" that Dr. Dods gives an unhappy prominence to these alleged inaccuracies, that he dwells on them in a way which, while far from intended, is fitted to grate on the feelings of those who tremble at the Divine Word;" that "the sermon is open to grave objections in the respects, and on the grounds already stated;" that "they do not wonder at the anxiety it has awakened;" and yet the only thing proposed to be done, according to this report, is to say to Dr. Dods that "*Probably he would do well not to carry the publication any further, at least in its present form.*" From this we dissent, as far too weak and altogether inadequate, and submit that the sermon should be disapproved of by the Presbytery, and that Dr. Dods should be enjoined not to carry the publication any farther.

A. C. FULLARTON, ANDREW A. BONAR, JOHN RIDDELL,
WILLIAM JEFFREY, JAMES H. DICKSON.

* See preface to Sermon of Dr. Dods, p. 9 at top.

We dissent from the report—specially from the conclusion—for the following and other reasons :—

I. The report implies that, though some views are set forth in a seriously objectionable manner, and in language of which the Committee cannot approve, yet no opinion is expressed which in itself calls for disapproval or censure on the part of the Presbytery. Whereas, in our judgment, the publication contains statements contrary to, or inconsistent with, the Word of God and Confession of Faith, in so far as—

1. It is asserted that there are inaccuracies and errors in some parts of Scripture, such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory, and from the erroneous impressions of the human writers regarding ordinary matters not being corrected (pages 9, 10, 17, 18, 3rd edition). This is inconsistent with the Confession, which declares the Holy Scripture to be the Word of God written—that God is the author thereof—that it is all given by inspiration of God—and is of infallible truth and divine authority (Cap. I. 1, 2, 4, 5), and contrary to the teaching of Scripture, which, throughout, asserts the purity, perfection, certainty of all the words of God—Psalms, xii. 6, &c., &c., &c. Our Lord constantly appeals to the very words of Scripture—“It is written”—“How readeest thou”—“Have ye not read what David did”—“The Scripture cannot be broken,” &c., &c., &c.

2. The special equipment ascribed to the human writers who were chosen to record the revelations is nothing more than a high degree of sanctifying grace, with opportunity of knowing a revelation at first hand, and historical facts in the ordinary way (pp. 19, 20, 21, 22). This is not inspiration, but something essentially differing from it, and is therefore contrary to the foresaid statements of the Confession, and to the Scripture itself. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 1 Cor. ii. 13, &c., &c.

II. The publication as a whole, in its general scope and tenor, is of a dangerous and unsettling tendency in its bearing on the doctrine of inspiration, as taught in Scripture and the Confession, and as hitherto understood in this church.

III. The Presbytery is therefore called to disapprove and censure said publication on the grounds above specified, and to require that it be withdrawn.

ALEX. URQUHART, HENRY ANDERSON, R. C. SMITH,
ROBERT GAULT, GEORGE CAMPBELL.

GLASGOW, 5th Nov., 1877.

I dissent from the third section of the report.

(1) Because it does not contain a sufficiently explicit condemnation of those parts of the sermon and preface which seem to affirm that there are real errors in the original Scriptures.

(2) Because, while the quotations from the theological works of Dr. C. Hodge and Thomas Scott are of value, inasmuch as they “pretty accurately express” Dr. Dods’ “view of the inaccuracies

in Scripture," the connection in which they are introduced is such as to suggest an unfair representation of the views of the respective authors, seeing it is manifest from the context and from other portions of their writings that neither of them admits that there are any inaccuracies in the original Scriptures, "such as occur in ordinary writings through imperfect information or lapse of memory."

I dissent from the conclusion of the report.

(1) Because, notwithstanding the instructions given to the Committee to advise the Presbytery as to its duty in this matter and the strong condemnation expressed in the report, an expression of the Presbytery's disapproval of the sermon is not recommended.

(2) Because advice is given to Dr. Dods as to his probable duty in reference to the continued publication of the sermon, instead of being given to the Presbytery as to its duty in that matter, which, in my judgment, is to enjoin Dr. Dods not to carry the publication any farther, at least in its present form.

ROBERT HOWIE.

I dissent from section three, as making a use of passages from the writings of Dr. C. Hodge and Thomas Scott, which is unfair to the writers and may be misleading to others; and for the same reason, though in stronger degree, I dissent from section four in its use of a passage from the works of Halyburton.

JAMES NICOLL.

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